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MASKED MEN**

The **Hockey News**

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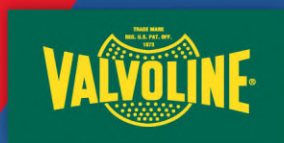


BRADEN HOLTBY
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CAN MARC-ANDRE FLEURY BECOME THE NEW KING OF GOALIE WINS?

A HISTORY OF INNOVATION



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1866



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OVER 140 YEARS UNDER THE HOOD

The Hockey News

thn.com

December 7, 2015
Vol. 69 No. 08



CROSS THE LINE

Boston goalie Jonas Gustavsson is careful not to lose his head as he thwarts a Habs goal.

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Modern goalies don't log the crazy minutes they used to, but workloads are trending back up

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'Net Detective' burned bright and faded fast in the '90s. His teammates reflect on what went wrong

With Mike Brophy

ON THE COVER Carey Price by Francois Lacasse/
NHLI via Getty Images



28 THN Goalie Rankings

Carey Price is so good, he's in his opponents' heads, and also the heads of every ex-NHL goalie who voted on our definitive rankings. We look at what makes the best of the lot so great, from Lundqvist's brain to Rinne's glove to, well, everything Price does in net

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STOP THE BROKEN RECORDS

Tweaks, tech and time have always changed the game. So why all the fear about larger nets?



I F YOU'RE RESISTANT TO ENLARGING THE SIZE OF NETS, don't fret. You're in the majority, aligned with some of the brightest thinkers in the game. I can respect that. What I can't reconcile, however, is how some of these sharp minds use history as their primary weapon of defense, claiming a tweak to the nets will force us to rewrite the record books. That argument has more holes than the Albert Hall.

If you can name one other aspect of the game that hasn't changed since Lord Stanley donated his cup to us, Tweet to me: @JKTHN. I could fill the rest of this page citing things that have. In fact, the NHL has done that, and more, in its Guide and Record book, on pgs. 10-11 in this year's edition. Here's a sliver of things covered:

Amendments have been made over the years to how a goalie can stop a puck, how and where he can play it, the size of his gear and whether opponents can screen him. Minor penalties have gone from a fully served three minutes to two or fewer. The game has been played seven-aside, six, five and four. All kinds of regulations have been placed on sticks. Once upon a time, the forward pass was illegal. Regular season overtime has bounced from 20 minutes to 10 to non-existent to five. An automatic penalty was adopted for shooting the puck over the glass in the defending zone, and teams that iced the puck were forbidden to change players. Oh, and did we mention the size of the net wasn't always standard? It didn't become that way until 1926.

Combine these mandated fixes with evolution and high-tech, and you get a game that only just resembles the one that was played in the early 20th Century. Each of these moving parts has impacted the ebb and flow of games, offense and defense. In fact, by not exploring net dimension tweaks, we're disadvantaging today's shooters compared to the high flyers of the 1980s, who didn't have to deal with huge goalie equipment and improvements in technique. Imagine if Ovechkin played in the same era in which Gretzky was setting all his standards.

Bottom line, the record book should be ignored when assessing larger nets, just as it was when OT returned in 1983-84 and we went from 60 games in the Original Six era eventually to 82. If larger nets are explored and don't work, so be it. If we live in fear of altering history, we're misguided – and perhaps blowing a good opportunity.

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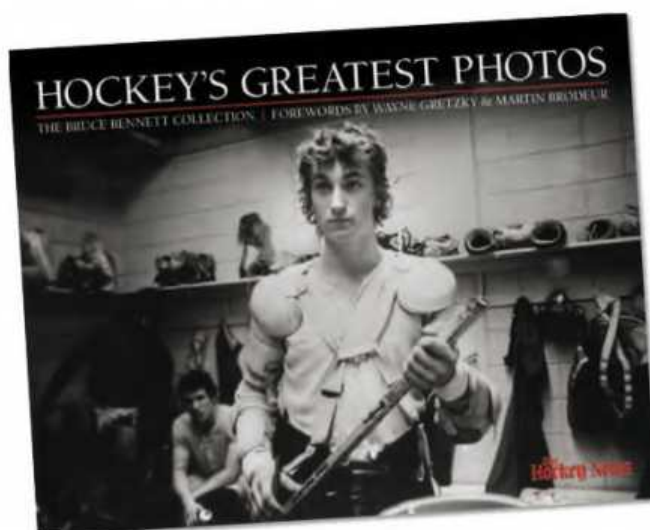
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INSIDE HOCKEY



TUUKKA RASK

MEASURING THE 'UNMEASURABLE'

Analytics are helping to remove the voodoo from goalies, and technology will soon take the stats to another level

THE COLLECTIVE MANTRA FOR anyone who's tried using numbers to analyze goalies over the past few years is "goalies are voodoo." Figuring out who's been great is the easy part: they're the ones who make the most saves. Figuring out who's going to continue being great? Good luck.

Check out the save percentage leaderboard from last season and the season before. There's almost no year-to-year consistency. That's where the

voodoo cries come from. If stopping pucks is a skill, then you'd expect some repetition, but that's generally not the case.

With any numbers-based analysis, context is king, and that's what's missing for goalie stats right now. Save percentage treats every stop as a yes or no question when there's more to consider about each shot. Stats website War On Ice has developed a location-adjusted save percentage that helps the cause, but shot prox-

2 'U', 2 'K', LOTS OF 'D'

The stats say Rask has benefited a bunch from the Bruins' solid D-corps.

imity is only part of the equation. Things like how fast the puck was moving, how quick the release was, whether the shot was assisted and whether there was a screen are all variables not currently accounted for.

Those are the questions that led to Chris Boyle's creation of the Shot Quality Project. Boyle is tracking the events that happen before the shot even occurs with a focus on puck movement before the shot gets to the net. According to Boyle, most differences in shot quality can be attributed to pre-shot movement that can make things difficult for goaltenders.

Boyle has spent the past few years watching game tape and has tracked roughly 70,000 shots separated into multi-thousand shot buckets for different goalies. Naturally, he doesn't ascribe to the "goalies are voodoo" philosophy. "I think goalies are the same," Boyle said. "Their surroundings are what change, and only the top ones can overcome them. That's why everyone has had such a difficult time trying to separate what makes a great goalie from an average one, because there are all these variables that nobody's tracked to this point."

What Boyle has found is that, on average, goalies stop roughly 95 percent of shots

they can set for and see, and those shots make up 85 percent of all shots a goalie faces. The other 15 percent are shots that contain movement from a pass, tip or rebound, and it's on those shots that 50 percent of goals are scored (see sidebar). What that means is goalies who see fewer of those shots will have an easier time making saves and have an inflated save percentage as a result.

Boyle points to Carey Price and Tuukka Rask, two goalies who are routinely near the top of the league in save percentage but have faced very different shot selections. Of the shots he's tracked for each goalie, Price sports a .923 save percentage, while Rask is at .926. Switch their environments and Price jumps to a .934 while Rask drops to a .915. Both goalies are above average considering their environments, but when factoring out that noise it becomes clear Price is the better goalie.

That shouldn't come as a huge surprise, as Boston has generally been a strong defensive team in the Zdeno Chara era while Montreal has been relatively weak. According to Boyle, Boston's defense saves 12 more goals per 1,000 shots compared to Montreal's defense, making things much easier for Rask than Price. That's a significant factor that goes unnoticed with what's currently available for goalie stats.

While systems like the Shot Quality Project will help with





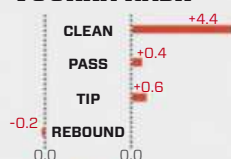
AGAINST AVERAGE

USING THE SHOT QUALITY Project, here's how four goalies fare in different scenarios compared to an average 'tender in terms of goals saved based on that goalie's defensive environment. For example, Price saves the Habs over eight goals for every 1,000 clean shots he faces.

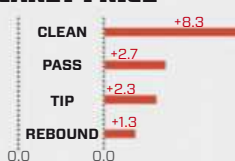
* Goals saved above or below average per 1,000 shots



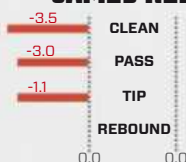
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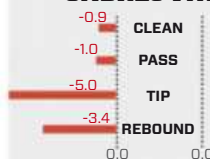
CAREY PRICE



JAMES REIMER



ONDREJ PAVELEC



goalie analysis, new technology in the form of player tracking will take it to another level.

"We're going to be able to tell who's efficient in their routes for pucks, who stays square the longest and who tracks the puck the best," Boyle said. "That's the kind of thing that I'm looking for, but it doesn't really come up because we can't capture it at the moment."

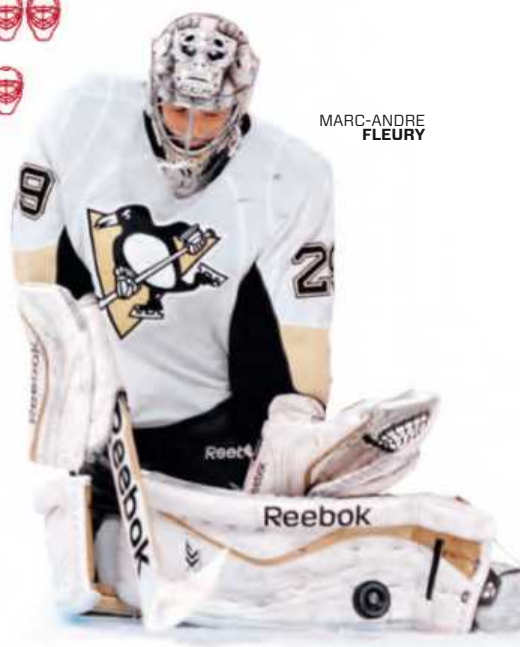
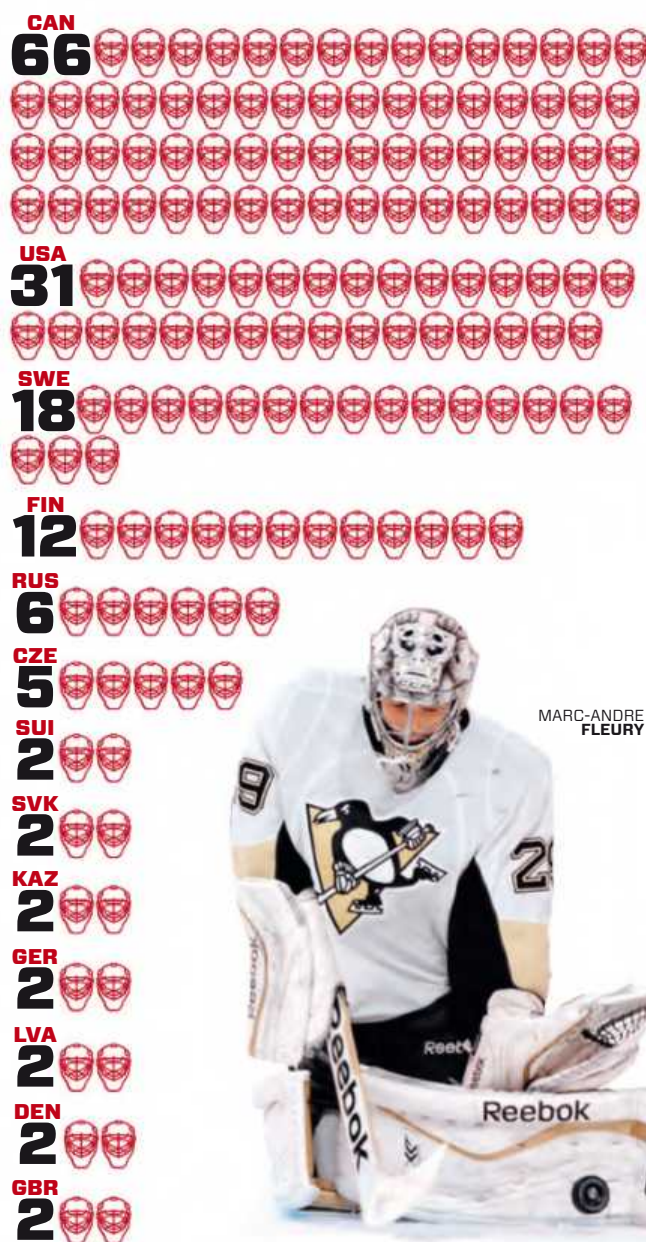
For player stats, it's always about the process. People look at shot attempts (i.e. Corsi) because they usually lead to goals. Good process means good results, and it's the same story for goalies. For goalies that means how they react to the puck moving before the shot is taken and how they set up to make the save. Results will tell you who's made the save, but knowing who'll make future saves is much more important. That's why the process for making saves becomes just as valuable as making the save itself.

To Boyle, the future of goalie analysis will be more about route efficiency – like what you'd see in baseball – than an expected save percentage based on shot probabilities. It'll tell you who's reading plays and finding pucks best, two things that are hallmarks of elite goal-tending. Given the current data available, that process is mostly an unknown and unquantifiable variable. With player tracking, that will surely change, but for now all we're left with is voodoo.

— DOMINIK LUSZCZYSZYN

MOMMY, WHERE DO GOALIES COME FROM?

149 goalies have played in the NHL over the past five seasons. Not surprisingly, Canada leads the way in 'tender production, accounting for 44 percent of keepers



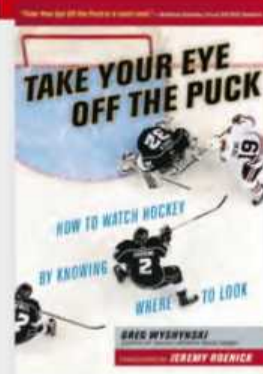
MARC-ANDRE FLEURY

THE INSTIGATOR

By Charlie Teljeur

THIS "GOALTENDER INTERFERENCE" STUFF IS GETTING A LITTLE OUT OF HAND...

Upon further review the goal is disallowed. While the forward was not in the crease he was blocking the goalie's WiFi access. No goal!



LAUGH & LEARN

Take Your Eye Off the Puck: How to Watch Hockey by Knowing Where to Look would make an excellent primer for any new fan. At the same time, it is a great read for longtime followers who know a lot.

Greg Wyshynski, editor of the Yahoo! Sports blog Puck Daddy, has written a book that is as funny as it is informative. He explains all things hockey in a straightforward manner, neither dumbing things down nor being too inaccessible.

Early chapters in the book break down the nuts and bolts of the game, from each position's responsibility, to popular strategies, to how players try to score – and stop – goals. One chapter even gives a behind-the-scenes look at a day in the life of a player as he prepares for a game.

Toward the end of the 256-page book, Wyshynski explains fancy stats like Corsi and Fenwick and predicts what the future of the NHL will hold. He delves into topics like expansion, equipment innovation and rule changes.

On the surface, this all sounds simple, but Wyshynski gives the right amount of detail, going in-depth without getting overly technical. As expected, there are some laugh-out-loud moments, too. Wyshynski's wry sense of humor and penchant for pop culture references shine throughout. — **SAL BARRY**

In The CARDS

GOALTENDER MANON RHEAUME made history when she became the first woman to play in a major junior hockey game, and again when she was the first woman to play in an NHL pre-season game. Trading card company Classic, best known for making cards of top prospects and draft picks, issued over 50 cards of Rheaume in a three-year span. Her strangest card is from a set released in 1993 called *Deathwatch 2000*, based on a little-known comic book series of the same name. For some reason, the set also included bonus cards of Ken Griffey Jr., Shaquille O'Neal and Rheaume, each illustrated as superheroes. Looking at the way 'Super Manon' is holding her stick, it's pretty clear the artist has never watched a hockey game.

BY SAL BARRY OF PUCKJUNK.COM



GOALIES NOW ALL ABOUT THAT BASE

Goodbye to the butterfly? No trouble. A solid foundation, along with size and speed, has made this the greatest goalie generation

WE'RE LIVING IN THE GREATEST goaltending era the sport has ever seen. The modern-day legends – Dominik Hasek, Martin Brodeur, Patrick Roy – still stand in a league of their own, but, across the board, today's keeper is bigger, stronger, faster and more fundamentally sound than his forebearer.

In an age with stick technology that allows snipers to shoot harder and more accurately, how have goaltenders gotten to the point where they're increasingly unbeatable? If you ask former NHL netminder Steve Valiquette, now a broadcaster with the MSG Network who runs his own goaltending school, it's all in the training. Like no time before, goaltenders are brought up learning the fundamentals at a young age and developing a more technically sound game than their predecessors. They understand the four pillars of goaltending, which include having the proper depth and angle, as well as skillful footwork and an ability get square to the puck.

"If you don't understand those elements then you're essentially just chasing rabbits," Valiquette said. "You're flailing all over the place, you're diving when you shouldn't be, and

NHL goalies understand this better than anybody."

The necessity for strong movement has modified styles in recent years. As Goalie Guild founder Justin Goldman explained, the position can be viewed as a pendulum. On one end is the reactionary stand-

up style of the 1980s, and on the other is the slip-sliding butterfly that was prevalent during Roy's heyday with the Colorado Avalanche. That pendulum is starting to swing back in the direction of goaltenders staying upright. "It's something you're going to see over the next couple of years," Goldman said. "Goalies are really going to start to rely on keeping their feet, focusing on patience and using their inside edges to their advantage so they're not dropping down early and butterflying on every single play unless it's absolutely necessary."

One technique changing the way the position is played is head trajectory training. Valiquette was taught the skill by Lyle Mast, a goaltending coach who developed the system and lends his time to WHL's Tri-City Americans among others. Valiquette explained it as goaltenders keeping "their head

down on the puck – not up on the horizon, but down where the water meets the sand – and looking down at it with their head."

Valiquette admitted there's a learn-

ing curve. "A goalie may feel a little slow when learning this technique initially," he said. "In essence, a goalie will follow the puck with their head until it gets over their leading knee and then the movement begins. They actually gain speed through the crease because



HENRIK LUNDQVIST

LESS IS MORE

Lundqvist's new, lighter Bauer S1 skates are giving him better post-to-post push.



of the old-school, drive-the-puck-hard-to-the-net mentality.

Goaltenders are also finding physical

ways to increase their speed.

Lundqvist, who Goldman pointed to as one of the most creative netminders when it comes to equipment modification, is wearing the new skates that do away with the protective outer shell, called cowling. In essence, he's wearing a one-piece goalie skate. "The skate is lighter and it has a better attack angle – the angle that the skate is at when he goes to lift it off the ice, how quickly he can catch his inside edge and push off," Goldman said. "Lundqvist is so sharp with his footwork right now, and I think a part of that has to do with how he's wearing skates that are pretty revolutionary. No one else in the league, except maybe one or two guys, is wearing them right now." – JARED CLINTON

their head is positioned over their leading knee."

Another boost to movement has come with the implementation of the Reverse Vertical-Horizontal style of post play. Manitoba Moose goaltending coach Rick St. Croix pointed to Carey Price and Henrik Lundqvist as two of the NHL's best at using the Reverse VH, which allows for increased protection around the posts and crease areas. "Goaltenders are able to slide into their posts and use their posts as a pushing point and a stopping point," said St. Croix. "The Reverse VH allows them to go right into the post and seal it with their shoulder. It's very effective."

Valiquette added the implementation of Reverse VH has hampered the effectiveness

.915

The league-wide save percentage in 2014-15. It was the highest mark since the NHL began recording the statistic in 1982-83

THE MASK MAN

BY MATT LARKIN



▲**TOP:** Carey Price's mask designs consistently have clean, vintage looks, with more detail visible the closer your eyes come to them.

BOTTOM: Gunnarsson loves to flex his fantasy art muscles with Pekka Rinne's masks, which have elaborate, predatory monster themes.



▲**TOP:** Ben Bishop's newest Lightning lid features stunning airbrush work from Gunnarsson that makes it glow in the dark.

BOTTOM: Henrik Lundqvist's 2014 Stadium Series design honored the New York Yankees, complete with pinstripes.

THE MOST PROLIFIC MASK PAINTER IN THE GAME GOT HIS START in a barn. That isn't hockey slang. It was literally a barn. David Gunnarsson grew up in Smaland, a small town in southern Sweden, on his family's farm. His grandfather wanted him to take over the business someday. "But I became a painter," Gunnarsson said, "and a farmer in heart and soul."

Gunnarsson loved art. His favorite thing to do was paint. His specialty was airbrushing, a technique that involves painting with a pressurized spray tool. He started DaveArt, his own business, at 16, running a studio out of a farmhouse on the family property. He most commonly painted goalie masks, as he loved working with players to tell their personal stories via their designs. No concept was ever too grandiose. "I really like to try to be as versatile as possible," he said. "For me, fantasy is the most important thing."

The company grew in popularity after Gunnarsson finished school and became sustainable as a full-time business. His work became known and used all over the Swedish League and eventually the NHL, where he has become the league's most popular designer by far. He works exclusively with pro netminders now. They typically start with a brainstorm session via phone, email or Skype. He sends them sketches and starts painting once he gets the green light. "It's a very fun, exciting and creative process," he said.

DaveArt will celebrate its 20th birthday as a pro mask business next year. Gunnarsson's plans for the anniversary are about as quirky and creative as you'd expect from a talented artist. He wants Lego. Lots and lots of Lego. He describes himself as a super fan and wants to buy a "huge project."

Today, Gunnarsson, 39, still lives on the family farm with his wife and three children, aged five, eight and 11. "My wife has four kids, including me," he joked.

So what mask designs is he most proud of today? It's not an easy question for him. "I am not a nostalgic artist," he said. "I almost never look back. I only look at future projects and paintings. But of course it's fun when a mask I create gets a lot of attention."

Several fall under that category (see images left and right for his picks). But another mask, one with close ties to his heart, is his true favorite.

Gunnarsson was close friends with goaltender Stefan Liv, an SHL mainstay. The two lived nearby each other and regularly met up to trade mask design ideas. Liv eventually joined the KHL, but he died tragically in the 2011 Lokomotiv Yaroslavl plane crash. Liv's son, Herman, is an aspiring goalie, and this past summer Gunnarsson painted a mask for him featuring Stefan.

Gunnarsson chose Herman to be the poster boy for 'DaveArt HERO,' a project that invites people to submit stories about good deeds they've done or witnessed in exchange for having Gunnarsson paint them their dream masks. He's living proof that art can spread important positive messages around the world. **TRIP**



MALARKEY WITH MATT LARKIN



CONNOR
HELLEBUYCK

THE BLUE ICE IS TOO GREEN

Low age limit for Team North America goalies is a risky move for a World Cup that already has a lot to prove

THINK OF THE 2016 WORLD CUP AS A Franken-tournament or, for the younger crowd, a Megazord tournament.

Part of the field is powerful and predictable. Seeing Canada, the U.S., Sweden, Russia, Finland and the Czech Republic ice their best players should mimic Olympic-caliber action. The World Cup's other two appendages, though, are wild cards. Team Europe and Team North America could compete seamlessly with the other six teams or implode like rejected bodily organs. The Euros mix the world's best from all the other remaining nations into one squad, while Team North America's pool includes Canadian and U.S.-born players aged 23 and younger as of Sept. 1, 2016.

Detractors might call the World Cup a shameless money grab by the NHL. The league and NHL Players' Association will split the revenue, expected to be as much as \$200 million. That's a big step up from the zero dollars either organization earns from the Olympics, which are run by the IIHF. I see no problem with the NHL's actions here. It's a business, and its goal is profit. There's no evidence yet to suggest the World Cup and Olympics are mutually exclusive, either. My money is on the players heading to Pyeongchang, South Korea in 2018, as we should never underestimate how much they enjoy the Olympics. And even if the World Cup won't match the Olympics in quality of play, that doesn't make the World Cup bad. Best-on-best hockey in September doesn't make our lives worse, gimmicks and all.

But one oversight threatens to collapse

the idea and make the NHL look bad: the age limit for North America's goaltenders.

North America's management, led by GM Peter Chiarelli and assistant GM Stan Bowman, has an embarrassment of riches among 23-and-younger skaters to choose from. Connor McDavid, Nathan MacKinnon, Sean Monahan, Johnny Gaudreau, Aaron Ekblad, Dougie Hamilton, Seth Jones and Jacob Trouba headline a talented group with outstanding skating ability. It has a puncher's chance in a short tournament.

The stat that leaps off the page among North America's potential goalies, however: the number zero. That's how many of the top candidates play in the NHL right now. Roster contenders Connor Hellebuyck, Zach Fucale, Malcolm Subban and John Gibson all play in the AHL. They're predictably flourishing, but they sorely lack experience against the world's top players. Only Gibson has had an extended NHL look.

Maybe one of the young stoppers gets hot enough for long enough next September. It's happened on the international stage before. Hellebuyck started for Team USA at the 2015 World Championship, facing lots of NHLers, and he was spectacular, posting a 1.37 goals-against average and .948 save percentage in eight games. Gibson had similar success with the U.S. at the 2013 worlds. Hellebuyck didn't want to speculate on his chances of starting for North America, but he admitted the 2015 worlds were good for his career. "It helped me make the transition to the next level," he said. "Now I have something to look back on and keep my confidence high. It helped me be more

patient and see the game a bit better."

But he also said it was "just a tournament" and that he took his success with a grain of salt. Even a favorite for the Team North America crease job acknowledges the small sample size. Why, then, wouldn't the NHL and NHLPA consider customizing the goalie age limit? North America's request for an age exception was denied. "It was a collaborative process between NHL hockey operations and the NHLPA, and after considering a variety of options, the consensus was that selecting and sticking with one uniform age cutoff for all players made the most sense," one NHL representative said.

Does it make sense? Fifty-six of the 65 goalies to play NHL minutes this season (86 percent) are 25 or older. No goalie 23 or younger has won the Vezina Trophy since 1995-96. With such a wealth of worldwide goaltending talent, it's harder and harder to break in early. Carey Price, Jonathan Quick, Cam Ward and Henrik Lundqvist, to name a few, became starters by age 23, but no goalie younger than 25 has a No. 1 job to himself today unless you count the injured Robin Lehner. Petr Mrazek, 23, has earned a split of Detroit's net, and that's it.

Most goaltenders 23 and younger have barely sniffed the NHL nowadays, so the World Cup is gambling a lot on them. What happens if North America gets blown out because of shaky puck-stopping? The league's new cash cow becomes an endangered species as quickly as it arrives if the gimmick teams lack competitiveness.

Why not do everything in your power to ensure parity across all eight teams? Upping the goalie age limit sure would help, though it would have to be 26 to make a real difference. That would harvest Martin Jones, Braden Holtby, Jake Allen and Michael Hutchinson for Team North America.

Alas, the NHL and PA will cross their fingers and hope a baby-faced netminder saves the day. The tournament's success may depend on it. **THE**

MOST GOALIES 23 AND YOUNGER HAVE BARELY SNIFFED THE NHL, SO THE WORLD CUP IS GAMBLING A LOT

lar, posting a 1.37 goals-against average and .948 save percentage in eight games. Gibson had similar success with the U.S. at the 2013 worlds. Hellebuyck didn't want to speculate on his chances of starting for North America, but he admitted the 2015 worlds were good for his career. "It helped me make the transition to the next level," he said. "Now I have something to look back on and keep my confidence high. It helped me be more



PLAYING IT SAFE WITH STOPPERS

Starters have been playing more games over the past 20 years. Why can't they go for 82?

BY RONNIE SHUKER

FILE THIS UNDER THE CAPTAIN
Obvious department: Martin Brodeur owns just about every major record for goaltenders: wins (691), shutouts (125), games played (1,266), 30-win seasons (14), 40-win seasons (eight), minutes played (74,439)...you get the point.

But one record eluded him his entire career. In fact, no goalie has ever done it, though a few, including Brodeur, have come close. He tried for it every season, and it wasn't like he couldn't have done it. The problem was trying to convince the killjoys who called the shots in New Jersey to let him try. "I always begged my goalie coach, 'Come on! One year. Let's do it. This could be a record. I'll play

all 82 games. You can pull me after seven minutes if you want. Just let me start 82 games,'" Brodeur said, laughing. "He never bit on it."

As much as he wanted to run the table every season, Brodeur knew he'd never get to play all 82 games. And presumably neither did Cory Schneider nor Braden Holtby, the two most durable goaltenders in our THN Goalie Rankings (see pg. 33). Before this season, both said they wanted to play the entire year. Were they joking? Maybe. But the best want to be in the net every game. Brodeur, for one, was unequivocal when asked how serious he was about playing a full season. "Every season that I started, I wanted to play 82 games," he

said. "There was no doubt in my mind I could do it. Don't tell me physically and mentally my game is harder than Scott Stevens' the way he played the game."

It's an interesting point. Why does a No. 1 goalie need games off yet a No. 1 defenseman doesn't? To use a current comparison, why is Jonathan Quick's job more difficult than Drew Doughty's? The Kings average around 55 percent possession, so they control the puck for about 32 minutes per game. That means Quick is only active for about 28 minutes, if that, which is exactly

RISK MANAGEMENT

Brodeur believes goalies can play every game, but coaches and GMs are just too risk averse.

ment Doughty and other elite defensemen dish out and take in the form of bodychecks and blocked shots?

Simple: there's a greater risk of injury. Goalies themselves might be champing at the bit to play a full slate, but those behind the scenes caution against it. "Goalies, especially, they're going to be the ones that are your heavy sweaters and the ones that drop, most

“ EVERY SEASON THAT I STARTED, I WANTED TO PLAY 82 GAMES. THERE WAS NO DOUBT IN MY MIND I COULD DO IT — Martin Brodeur

what Doughty averaged in ice time last season. Quick and his cohort do absorb plenty of physical punishment by stopping pucks, but how is that any different from the punish-

likely, a significant amount of fluids throughout a game...so they're more susceptible to cramping," said Mark Nemish, strength and conditioning coach for the Washington Capi-

tals. "When you're losing all that water weight, you're also losing a large amount of electrolytes as well. That keeps your body in balance and muscles firing in harmony. Once you start disrupting that and you start disrupting the concentration of electrolytes and the cells of the body, it becomes much tougher for the muscles to contract properly. As a result, you're going to expend more effort in trying to do the same amount of work. If that's happening repeatedly over and over without proper recovery, there's no question there's a higher rate of injury."

The prevailing wisdom in the NHL is that a bona fide No. 1 goalie should play 60 to 69 games. Between 70 and 75 would be considered risky. Any more would be regarded as a death wish.

Over the past 20 years, however, and especially since the 2004-05 lockout, No. 1 goalies have been playing an increasing percentage of games (see sidebar below). Brodeur's career spanned those two decades, and he played 70 or more games 12 times, including 10 seasons in a row from 1997-98 to 2007-08. His career high came at age 34 when he played 78 games in 2006-07. From 1995-96, his first full season as a No. 1 goalie, until 2010-11, when at 38 his playing time began to decline, he played 86 percent of games with the New Jersey Devils

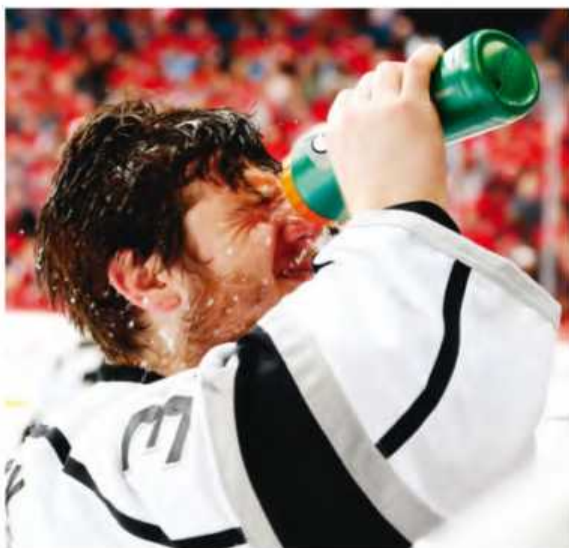
— 90 percent if you remove 2008-09, the only season he sustained a major injury.

Advancements in training and nutrition have made this bump possible. When Nemish began working in the league in 1998, the focus was on strength, not rest. Since then, teams have been taking recovery much more seriously, tracking metrics like sweat rates and energy expenditure. "The shift has been from my side of the profession to more of the recovery end," Nemish said. "We have more of a team approach from medical profes-

Grant Fuhr holds the record for most games played by a goalie. In 1995-96, at 33 years old and after logging just 17 games the season before, he played 79 games for the St. Louis Blues. He might've played them all had it not been for a late season knee injury. It was a remarkable run, especially given his new coach's well-known reputation for having a short leash on his goalies — it was Fuhr's first year in St. Louis and Mike Keenan's as well.

Fuhr had no idea what to expect, but 'Iron Mike' told him just keep playing until he told him not to. And so he did. "A lot of it is the way coaches think," Fuhr said. "If players play every day, then goalies should be able to play every day. It's the same mental preparation. The only difference is that you're standing out there the whole week."

Fuhr and Brodeur both agree the reason why netminders get games off is simply because coaches and GMs are playing risk management. The more a goalie plays, the greater the chance there is he gets injured. That's what will keep the 82-game record out of reach from durability demons like Schneider and Holtby. "I don't think you'll see it," Brodeur said. "Teams will be afraid to do that for a goalie. But I would love to see more guys who wanted to do it." **TIN**



OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD

Goalies like Quick sweat and retain heat more than players, so they're more prone to cramping.

sionals on board and are able to track and implement strategies to get (goalies) recovered. As a result, it ends up possibly having goalies play more and being hurt less frequently."

MOST GAMES PLAYED BY A GOALIE IN A SINGLE SEASON

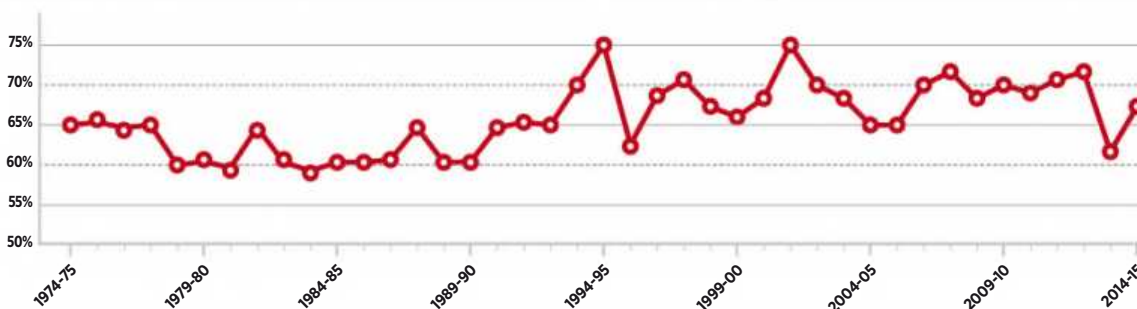
	Games
GRANT FUHR 1995-96	79
MARTIN BRODEUR 2006-07	78
MARTIN BRODEUR 2009-10	77
MARC DENIS 2002-03	77
BILL RANFORD 1995-96	77
MARTIN BRODEUR 1995-96	77
EVGENI NABOKOV 2007-08	77
MARTIN BRODEUR 2007-08	77
ARTURS IRBE 2000-01	77
FOUR GOALIES '06-'07, '07-'08, '08-'09	76



GRANT FUHR
1996

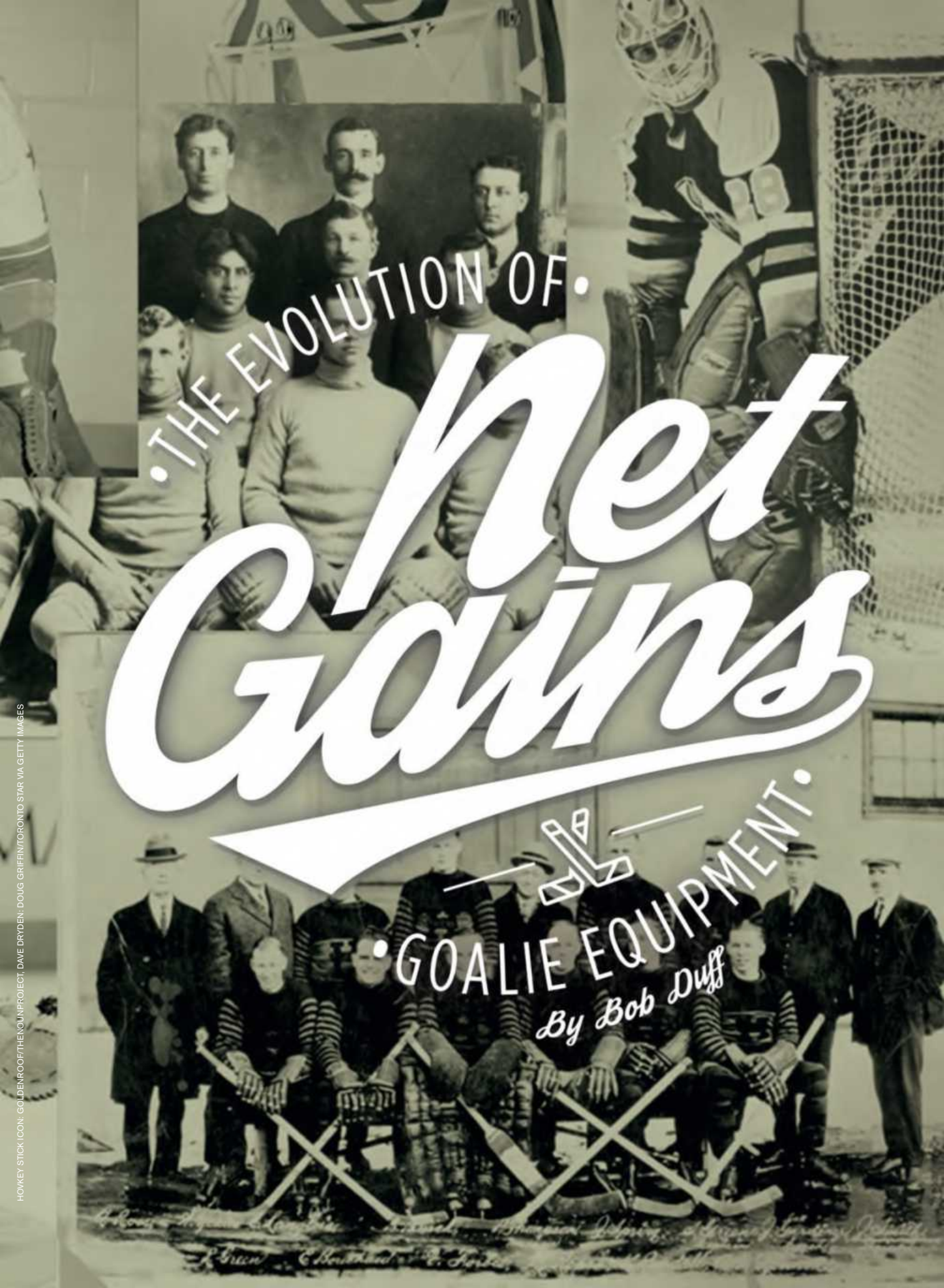
On The RISE

There have been peaks and valleys but, overall, No. 1 goalies have been logging an increasing share of games since the NHL began playing at least 80 games a season in 1974-75



THE GOALIE ISSUE





• THE EVOLUTION OF.

Net Goals

• GOALIE EQUIPMENT.
By Bob Duff



MONTREAL AMATEUR ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

IF YOU STUDY A PICTURE OF THE 1892-93 MONTREAL AMATEUR ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION, THE FIRST TEAM TO WIN THE STANLEY CUP, YOU WON'T BE ABLE PICK OUT GOALIE TOM PATON. THAT'S BECAUSE PATON WAS OUTFITTED WITH EXACTLY THE SAME GEAR AS THE REST OF HIS TEAMMATES.

A LOT HAS CHANGED SINCE THEN, TO PUT IT MILDLY.

Is it cricket?

In the early 1890s, goaltenders in Manitoba launched a revolution by donning cricket pads worn in that sport by wicket keepers to protect their legs. The 1896 Stanley Cup final saw goalie George 'Whitey' Merritt wear cricket pads as his Winnipeg Victorias defeated the defending champion Montreal Victorias, much to the chagrin of the champs, who vainly protested Merritt's use of those pads after he blanked them 2-0. Merritt proved to be the father of another invention: the goalie stick. He simply took a second piece of wood and fastened it to the lower half of his stick, providing him a wider base to aid in stopping pucks.



DESERONTO HOCKEY TEAM CIRCA 1909



HAMILTON TIGERS

Pop is the tops

In 1923, bicycle and horse harness repairman Emil 'Pop' Kenesky approached Hamilton Tigers goalie Jake Forbes and coach Percy LeSueur, suggesting that flattening out and thickening the cricket pads would offer more protection and cover more net. Kenesky stuffed them with kapok and deer hair, but he was too enthusiastic. The pads were so large Forbes sacrificed most of his mobility, losing his first four games while wearing them.

Prior to a game in Ottawa Dec. 29, 1923, Kenesky and LeSueur sought to alleviate the problem. They removed 17 pounds of stuffing to bring the pads down to seven pounds, and Forbes responded with a spectacular performance in a 3-2 win over the Senators. Variations of the leather and deer hair pads would stop pucks into the late 1980s.

Catching on

Mike Karakas and Frank Brimsek were goaltenders growing up in Eveleth, Minn. They were also battery mates on the same baseball team. In the late 1930s, Karakas (Chicago Black Hawks) and Brimsek (Boston Bruins) began playing with a baseball mitt-like innovation on their catching hand, rounding the glove off and sewing a webbed pocket between the thumb and index finger.

Emile Francis furthered this development in the 1940s when he had a shoemaker sew the cuff of a goalie glove on to a first baseman's trapper. Within a month, sporting goods stores were selling trapper gloves for goalies.



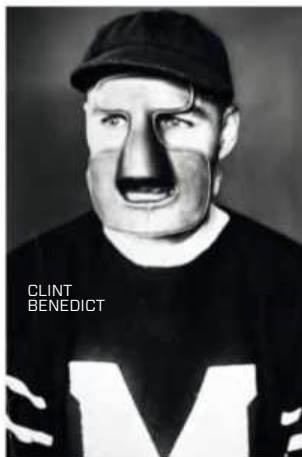
JOHNNY INGLIS' TRAPPER GLOVE

Masked men

Eddie Giroux wore a mask in practice for the Toronto Marlboros as early as 1903, but it wasn't until almost 30 years later that an NHL goalie would don facial protection, and it took almost an additional three decades for it to become commonplace.

Returning from a broken nose, Montreal Maroons goalie Clint Benedict donned a crude leather mask for a game against the New York Americans on Feb. 20, 1930, but he quickly discarded his historic gear. "The nosepiece proved the problem," Benedict explained to the *Montreal Gazette* shortly before his death late in 1976. "It obscured my vision."

It took until Nov. 1, 1959, for another Montreal goalie to don a mask. After his nose was smashed by a shot from New York Rangers forward Andy Bathgate, Jacques Plante refused to return to action without the mask he'd experimented with in practice. Plante posted a 3-1 victory and went on to backstop the Habs to the Stanley Cup. The goalie mask was here to stay.



CLINT BENEDICT



J-S GIGUERE

Michelin men

Into the 1990s, goalies sought to be as big as possible. They began to grow outsized as pads, gloves and body armor expanded exponentially, requiring the NHL to crack down on the trend as goals became harder and harder to come by. In 2009, the league measured the arm and leg length, chest, waist and hip circumference of every goalie to develop maximum standards. The idea was to return equipment to its original mission – to protect the goaltender from injury, not to cover almost the entire net.

Smokey's bend

While most view Ron Hextall as the genesis of the puckhandling goaltender, someone who played with Hextall on the Philadelphia Flyers knows it isn't true. Mark Howe was with the WHA's Houston Aeros when Don 'Smokey' McLeod first utilized the curved goal stick and became a puck-moving sensation. "He could really handle the puck," Howe said. "He was so good that in practice, he'd work with the forwards on line rushes."

McLeod found the bend enabled him to clear the puck more efficiently and with increased velocity. "The curved blade comes in handy," he told the *Toronto Star* in 1975, "especially when we're shorthanded."

In 1975-76, while with the Calgary Cowboys, McLeod set what was then a pro hockey record, racking up 13 assists.



Dryden the linker

Dave Dryden loved to mess with his goalie gear and during the summer of 1977 one of his experiments would change the position forever. Dryden took his fiberglass mask and cut out a large opening around the eyes. "I got some solder (to form a metal cage over the opening), and jiggled myself up a model," he said. He took his experiment to mask maker Greg Harrison, who then created the first fiberglass/cage combination mask, the style worn today by all NHL goaltenders. The design allowed them to play safely with their heads below the crossbar, enabling the butterfly style to evolve in the 1980s. "Dave completely revolutionized how a goaltender plays," said his brother, Hall of Fame goalie Ken Dryden, to the *Hamilton Spectator* in 2009.



DON MCLEOD

Lemelin foams the ice

In the mid-1980s, Calgary goalie Rejean Lemelin was on the forefront of the change from old-school leather and deer hair pads to the current synthetic leather and foam style. Leather pads weighed as much as 11 pounds and could absorb another six pounds of moisture over the course of a game. Lemelin used pads that weighed 50 percent less and allowed him to maintain his leg quickness as he grew older. "The pads added years to my career," Lemelin told *Sports Illustrated* in 1988. "Leg speed had always been my strength, so the book on me was, try to beat him up top. With the pads, I had the confidence in my leg speed to delay (committing to a save)."

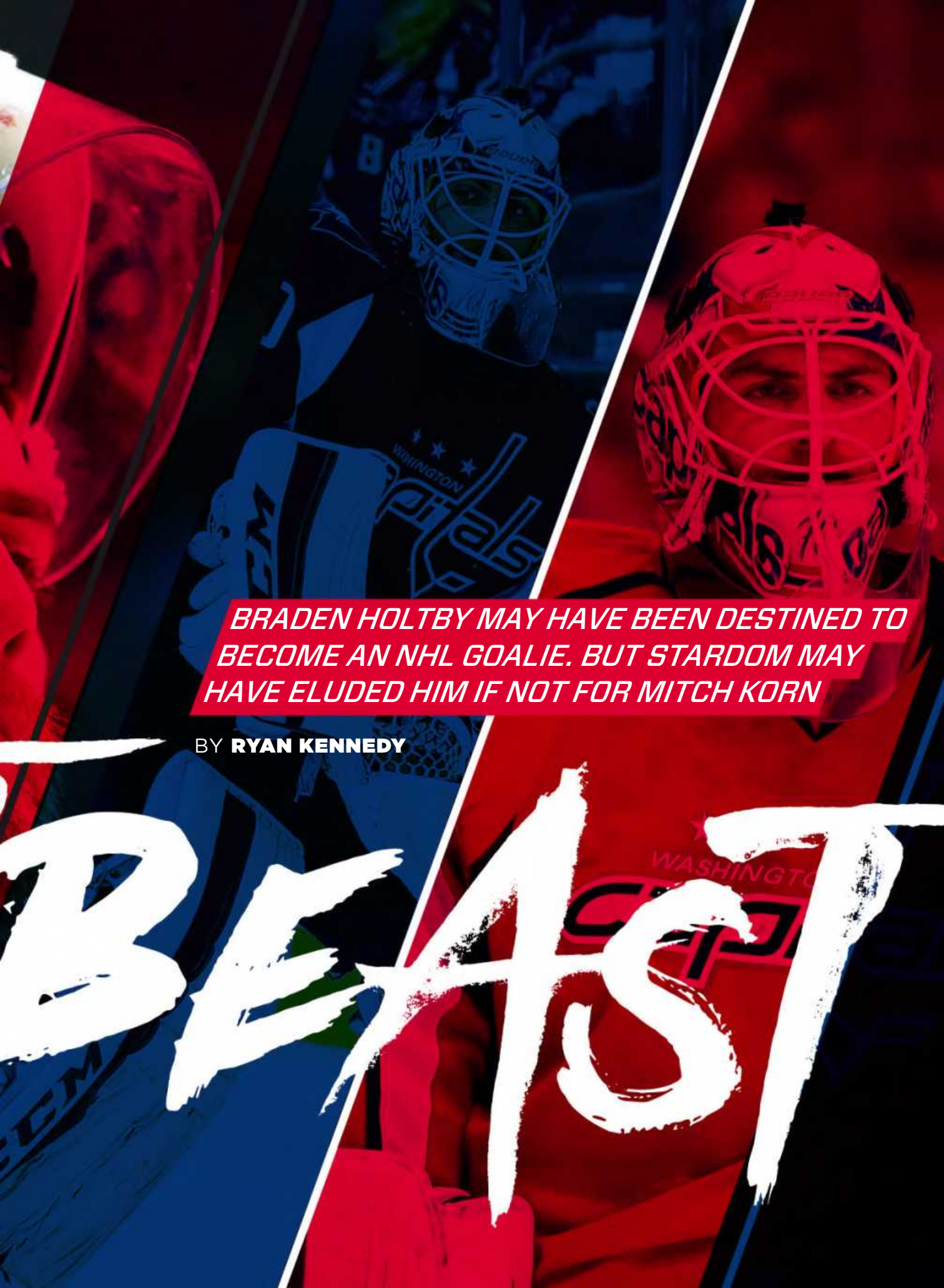


DEER HAIR PADS



BRADEN PATTEN
THE GOALIE ISSUE

#HOUT



*BRADEN HOLTBY MAY HAVE BEEN DESTINED TO
BECOME AN NHL GOALIE. BUT STARDOM MAY
HAVE ELUDED HIM IF NOT FOR MITCH KORN*

BY **RYAN KENNEDY**

BREAKFAST



CAPITAL ONE

Washington D.C. is a long way from the cattle and grain farm Holtby grew up on in rural Saskatchewan.

THE BOSTON BRUINS HAVE HAD A BIT OF A

problem recently when it comes to the Washington Capitals. Last season, the Bruins literally did not score a goal in three games against Braden Holtby and the Capitals, and on an early November night this season, Holtby is keeping the mojo going. Early on, the Bruins are putting on an impressive showing, peppering him with shots and getting a lot of traffic in front of him, but Holtby holds the fort, swatting pucks away like a samurai and dropping to his butterfly whenever the scene gets sketchy. The only blemish on Holtby's night comes when a puck deflects off Brooks Orpik's stick and bounces off Jimmy Hayes' chest for a Boston goal. In a game

Washington ends up winning 4-1, this is the kind of goal Holtby can now live with. "My experience with sports psychology taught me that you control the controllables," he said. "The ones that are hard to block out are the ones you could have done something different and should have. Trying to refocus after those are the ones you have to be mentally strong with."

Holtby used to have a different definition of mentally strong, and it didn't help his progress in net. But a string of goalie coaches, dating back to his junior days, have aided his evolution. His current mentor is Mitch Korn, a man who has influenced the goaltending community in perhaps an unmatched capacity. Korn's students don't just become better goalies. They all become NHL goalie coaches themselves. So even though Holtby and Korn have just begun their second year together in Washington, Korn has actually impacted Holtby for nearly a decade already. And the potential held within their marriage is obvious: a Stanley Cup in D.C. for the first time ever.

Korn describes goaltending as a thousand-piece jigsaw puzzle that needs to be assembled, and he's got a smart cookie on his hands in Holtby, who is quietly becoming one of the best netminders in the NHL. This is how that puzzle has come together.



Holtby is a country boy, born and raised in Marshall, Sask., a place so small he had to play his youth hockey one town over. Every year, every grade, he had the same classmates at school. His parents have a cattle and grain farm, and Holtby was drafted into service, for a while. "Up to the point, my dad realized I wasn't much of a farmer," he said. "He let me explore other options. I wasn't a big fan of the minus-30 weather to tend to the cows. Some of it was fun – the summer months – but it was too much work for me."

At the age of nine, Holtby's hockey skills had outgrown the comfy



REFLECTION

Holtby is a study of composure when he's on the ice. The passion comes out after games.

Garth Brooks, Alabama and Paul Brandt, an Albertan who did some shows with Tami and her band – but he has no time for new country. As for his mom, Tami became a fan favorite during Washington's 2012 playoff series against the Rangers thanks to her animated reactions to the ups and downs of what was a gut-wrenching series loss for the Caps. But we'll get back to those rival Rangers later.

From Lloydminster, Holtby's next major career step came in the WHL, when he suited up for the Saskatoon Blades. The Blades had little success during the goalie's tenure, and even when they racked up a 49-18-5 record, good for second in their conference, they were upset in the first round by seventh-seeded Lethbridge. The big positive that came out of Holtby's time in Saskatoon was getting to work with goalie coach and sports psychologist John Stevenson. "I was one of those guys that was so competitive

I WAS SO COMPETITIVE THAT I WOULD GO OUT THERE AND LOSE MY FOCUS WITHOUT KNOWING IT. I ALWAYS THOUGHT BEING INTENSE WAS PART OF BEING MENTALLY STRONG

– Braden Holtby

confines of the area, so the family moved to nearby Lloydminster, a town of 30,000 that has the unique distinction of straddling the provincial borders of Saskatchewan and Alberta (Holtby has the outline of the two provinces tattooed on his right arm). While it may have seemed like a big step for a farming family, the Holtbys were used to travelling thanks to the country music singing career of Tami Hunter Holtby, Saskatchewan's female vocalist of the year in 1996 and Braden's mom. Tami started off as a rock and roll singer but switched to country when she realized that's where the gigs are in Western Canada. Not coincidentally, her son prefers old country – such as

that I would go out there and lose my focus without knowing it," Holtby said. "I always thought being intense was part of being mentally strong, but it's a little different."

To this day, Holtby's Capitals teammates say he can be fiery off the ice, even though he is much calmer in the crease. And really, there's nothing wrong with being passionate in the dressing room if you're stoic between the whistles. "After we lose a game,"

said teammate Evgeny Kuznetsov, "he feels the pain if he makes a mistake."

Injuries to more senior goalies opened a lot of doors for Holtby, who first rose to prominence in the 2012 playoffs when starter Tomas Vokoun went down with a groin ailment. Holtby helped the Capitals dust off the Bruins in the first round before running up against Henrik Lundqvist and the Rangers. No team scored more than three goals in any of the seven insanely contested games in that series.

Washington let Vokoun walk after that, and it seemed as though Holtby and the Caps were well on their way. The shortened 2012-13 season went well enough, but 2013-14 was a disaster that still resonates in the Capitals' dressing room. "Two years ago was a year most of us would like to forget," Holtby said. "It wasn't very fun, but it was good because we went through a lot of adversity and it made us realize we can't take anything for granted in this business. Our coaching staff, personnel and management now is top-notch, and you realize it's not like that every time."

Coach Adam Oates and GM George McPhee were both dumped after the debacle, which saw the Capitals miss the playoffs altogether. And that's where the silver lining comes in. Internally promoted GM Brian MacLellan hired former Predators coach Barry Trotz, who brought an old friend from Nashville along with him to Washington.



Mitch Korn is a city boy, born in the Bronx. He watched the Rangers when he was a kid and eventually moved to Dumont, N.J., on the other side of the Hudson River. He didn't start skating until he was 11, but his passion for hockey was high. Eventually, he went on to the Can/Am hockey school in Guelph, Ont., first as a camper and then as a counsellor. It was also where he met Ted Ouimet, a journeyman goaltender who played one game for the St. Louis Blues in 1968-69. Ouimet gave Korn his big break. When Korn was 17, summer camp was two weeks away when he got a call. Ouimet had pulled out of the camp because he got a regular job elsewhere. Can/Am needed a new coach immediately. Korn got the gig.

This is where the legend of Korn's coaching prowess truly begins. "You can play the game all you want, but in order to develop a philosophy, in order to develop a progression, in order to make the thousand-piece jigsaw puzzle that it takes to play goal fit together for you in your head so that you can convey it, it takes time and practice," Korn said. "I was able to cut my teeth doing that, with lots of kids who would not tell you you're wrong or talk back. That was a great opportunity for me to start getting those pieces in place."

Korn went on to play goal himself for Kent State in Ohio, then coach with the Golden Flashes before heading to nearby Miami, where he would spend 30 years doing various jobs related to the NCAA team's arena, including running the summer camps and helping with the squad's goalies.

Throughout all this, Korn has run his own goalie camps in the summer. There are eight of them, spread throughout the U.S., from St. Louis to Minnesota, Nashville and New York. He personally teaches at every single stop, and, yes, he recognizes that sounds like lunacy. "People tell me I'm crazy," Korn said. "But I can't tell you how invigorating the summer camps are. They're demanding, and certainly at times I would like some time off, but we do good work. A lot of young people have learned from the way we do things, and I feel good about



A MENTAL GAME

Korn says stopping pucks properly is like assembling a thousand-piece puzzle.

that. And selfishly I do the camps because it's amazing how much I learn."

Korn believes the NHL can be a bit of an ivory tower, where habits are slow to change. For him, it's the kids who are trying new things out, and keeping tabs on the grassroots is vital.

Now, Korn, 58, has always had a few tricks up his own sleeves, as well. One of the hallmarks of his teaching comes in the innovations he sprinkles into his lessons. He'll have his goalies make pad saves while they are holding 18-pound medicine balls to teach them about the importance of core strength. He uses white pucks, mini-pucks, screen boards, deflection boards and even blindfolds to increase difficulty, so that game situations seem easier than practice.

THE KORN DIET

Numbers show goalie guru's tangible effect on Holtby's puck-stopping ability



SAVE %

PRE-KORN

2.60

GAA



SAVE %

POST-KORN

2.19

GAA



Since coming to Washington with Trotz in 2014, Korn's mission has been to make Holtby great. Fortunately, Holtby has known many of Korn's techniques since junior. Stevenson, Holtby's goalie coach in Saskatoon, worked with Korn in Edmonton during the 2004-05 lockout, so screen boards and white pucks were nothing new to the Caps netminder. There was also the fact the three men who preceded Korn in Washington were all good friends – Dave Prior, Olaf Kolzig and Arturs Irbe – and all of them spoke highly of Holtby.

Korn made sure he and his new pupil hit the ground running. Soon after Korn was hired in Washington, Holtby had to go to Minnesota for an eye test. The two used the trip as an excuse for a higher purpose. "It was more about getting to know each other, just the two of us," Holtby said. "Being able to talk quickly and efficiently about what we're trying to accomplish instead of worrying about hurting each other's feelings. We know each other well, and that's because he made a strong effort to do so."

What Korn found was a goaltender with a tremendous work ethic and the proper temperament to get better every day. But Holtby still had work to do.

In his video research, Korn noticed that Holtby was making all of his saves with his gloves and his pads. He rarely stopped a puck with his body. He was very athletic, but he might have been too athletic. "The mission was for him to gain a little

Combining these techniques with Korn's direct style of teaching has won him legions of followers and accomplished students, six of whom are currently goalie coaches in the NHL and others who used to hold such posts. "I always say he should eventually go in the Hall of Fame as a builder," Trotz said. "He's had a big impact on the NHL, very quietly, for close to 30 years now."

Korn's first NHL job came in 1991, working with the Buffalo Sabres (while still commuting from Oxford, Ohio). Not long after that, the Sabres traded for a young Czech named Dominik Hasek. With Korn as his goalie coach, Hasek would become an NHL legend, racking up four Vezina Trophies by 1998. Korn loved his time with Hasek (and eventually Grant Fuhr, who won a Jennings Trophy with Hasek in 1994), but Buffalo was not exactly a bastion of stability in the 1990s. The Sabres had four coaches, three GMs and three presidents during Korn's tenure, and he wanted a little more continuity in his life, not to mention an easier commute from Oxford. So after 1997-98, Korn left Buffalo for Nashville, where he continued his wizardry with goalies, developing Vokoun and Pekka Rinne, one of his most accomplished students. It was also where Korn met Trotz, and the two have been together ever since. Korn calls Trotz his "brother from another mother," and in Trotz he found a coach who complemented his work. "The way he coaches gives the goalies a chance to be good," Korn said. "And then it's up to the goalies to be great. And I hope the way I help the goalies gives them a chance to be great, which helps the team that Barry coaches."

HE SHOULD EVENTUALLY GO IN THE HALL OF FAME AS A BUILDER. HE'S HAD A BIG IMPACT FOR 30 YEARS NOW

– Barry Trotz



more body control," Korn said. "Have his limbs work together, rather than individually apart, in terms of reaching. To use his body more, because that lends itself to way more consistency, because I've never seen a puck go through a guy's belly button. And he did learn that. He learned to corral that athleticism to only when it is needed."

Holtby began to shift his body more, and despite playing the puck well he learned he doesn't have to handle every single dump-in that comes near him. These developments calmed his game to the point he could have control of everything going on around him. "I've watched 'Holt's' since he was drafted and the progress he has made is unbelievable," said Washington backup Philipp Grubauer. "He plays simple. He reads the game pretty well and doesn't do too much crazy stuff – just



simple. His body control is unbelievable."

And when things get hairy, as they did several times in that November win against Boston, Holtby can rely on a mantra instilled in him by Korn: "Default Tight."

The idea behind Default Tight is that Holtby's butterfly technique can erase a lot of the chaos that comes with a typical NHL shot attempt, assuming there are no gaps left open. "When you do drop in that uncertain moment," Korn said, "and maybe there's two sticks in front and it's going to get tipped, or it's coming through traffic and you know it's coming but you don't know where, it is amazing how many times Murphy's Law comes into the game of goal. If you provide a four-inch hole between your pads – which is really small – and you're not tight, that three-inch puck will find that hole at the most inopportune times, not when the score is 5-1."

This was a beautiful notion for Holtby, who had been well aware

for years that his athleticism was a blessing and a curse. As Holtby worked his way up the ranks, the weaknesses that came with his physical abilities were getting magnified. "You're making the big saves, but some goals are going in that shouldn't," Holtby said. "I knew the problem was there, but I didn't have a good game plan for fixing it until Mitch came along with different drills, video looking at different areas and teaching muscle memory in a way I had never really done before."

Holtby is a visual learner, so video was crucial last season, when the bulk of this work was done. He may not have felt like

CHAOS CONTROL

When things get a little out of hand, Holtby reverts to the Default Tight mantra.

CHILDREN OF THE KORN

Mitch Korn has worked with many goalies over the years, including some of the best ever. Here are his thoughts on a few:



GRANT FUHR

"Awesome guy, happy. We got Grant at the end of his career. His knees were going, his shoulder was going and I said 'Grant, you're a baseball pitcher. You break in at 19 and throw smoke, 102-mph fastballs. Now you're 32. You can't throw smoke anymore but still want to play. What do you do?' He says, 'Get other pitches!' And I said 'Fuhrs, you gotta get other saves.'"



DOMINIK HASEK

"I am a guy who is outside the box. I didn't come from inside the hockey world, I do things that are not normal. Well, so is Dom. Writer Mike Ulmer was the one who made the correlation that in a lot of ways, we were outside guys brought together that turned out to be good for each other. I believe he's the best goalie that has ever played, with all due respect to Roy and Brodeur."

his body was in the wrong position when he was on the ice, but the tape didn't lie. From there, Korn could use his direct personality and decades of experience to hone his student's game to a diamond tip. "He sees everything from the stands, which is amazing," Holtby said. "I'm always expecting to explain what happened on a certain play, but he already knows. He's a step ahead. He sees it as we see it, which is extremely efficient. You're not overthinking things, and you're not wasting energy trying to figure things out. It's a very easy game plan."



That brings us back to the future and the New York Rangers. Specifically, the late spring of 2016, when, if all goes according to plan, the Washington Capitals will be battling through the East en route to the Stanley Cup final. That route will at some point likely go through the Rangers, who have dispatched the Capitals in the playoffs three times in the past four seasons. In those three series, all of which went seven games, Washington never gave up more than 16 goals. The difference between heartbreak and elation was often one goal, and whether it's against the Rangers or another tough Metropolitan Division opponent, it's a situation Holtby and the Caps will likely face again this post-season. "They're a very good hockey team," he said. "Last year we gave ourselves the best opportunity to beat them. Our team was built for the playoffs. Before, we relied a little too much on our skill, we didn't have the same feeling of wanting to accomplish something as we do now."

For his part, Holtby shrugs off the fact the only goalie he has ever lost to in the NHL playoffs is Lundqvist. Holtby's eye is set squarely on bringing a Cup to Washington. The franchise has been to the end just once, getting swept in the 1998 final by the Detroit Red Wings, but expectations have been high ever since Alex Ovechkin became one of the most dangerous scorers in the history of the game. Ovechkin's supporting cast was already impressive before the team brought in T.J. Oshie and Justin 'Mr. Game 7' Williams, while the D-corps is in a great place, led by John Carlson. But it's all going to come down to Holtby. "You can't win without trusting your goalie," Trotz said. "If you're not getting the saves you're expecting, your team plays a little tentative at times. They erase all our mistakes. They set the confidence level. No matter what your lineup is, you know you're OK that night. That's a pretty comforting feeling."

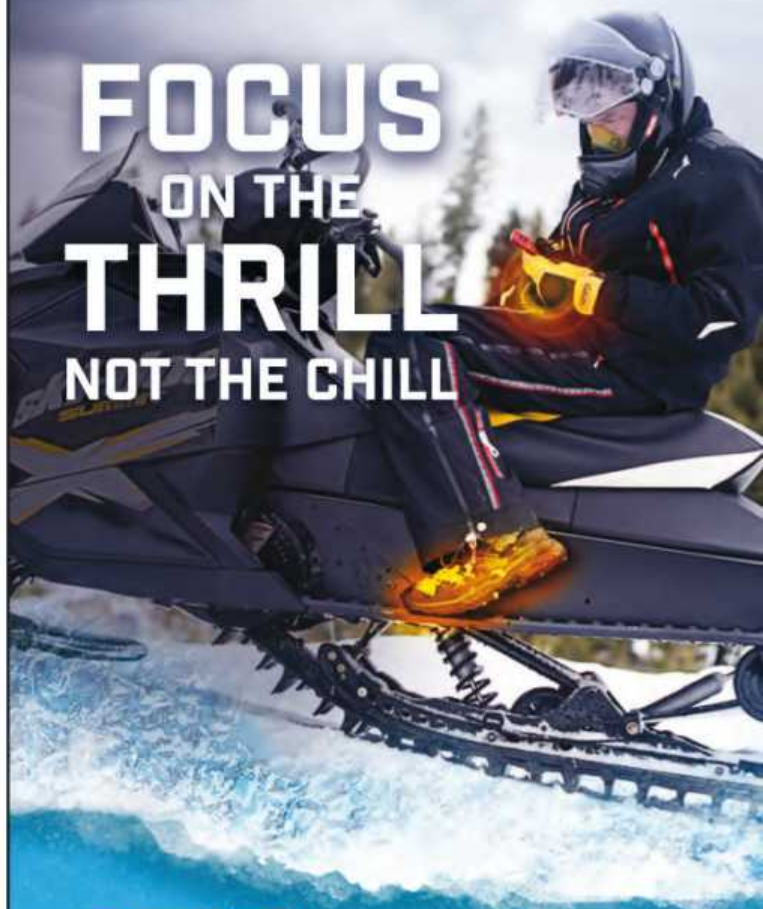
So when the game is on the line and opponents are scrambling and gnashing like wolverines in front of Holtby's crease, hoping to find that four-inch gap, that is when the student will remember his teacher's simple mantra: Default Tight. **THE**



PECKA RINNE

"Maybe the best goalie playing today. And a phenomenal person. He's a great goalie and he's a better person. And that's pretty awesome."

FOCUS ON THE THRILL NOT THE CHILL



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**3 HEAT
SETTINGS**



TWO DECADES AGO Jim Carey took the NHL by storm. After an impressive showing the season prior, Carey had a Vezina Trophy-season in 1996 as a 21-year-old.

His pro career was short, but it was prosperous. He signed a four-year, \$11-million contract, but injuries quickly took their toll. And after stops in Boston and St. Louis, along with a couple stints in the minors, Carey retired from hockey. There was no Hollywood ending to the brief career of the goalie nicknamed 'Net Detective.' For a season and a half, however, Carey was brilliant. He was 18-6-3 with a 2.13 goals-against average, .913 save percentage and four shutouts in the lockout-shortened 1994-95 season. He went 35-24-9 with nine shutouts, a 2.26 GAA and .906 SP in 1995-96 to win the Vezina.

KEITH JONES, LW: The Jim Carrey movie *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective* was just out, and they used to play clips during stoppages in play. The fans really got into it in Washington, and the team did a really good job in terms of the production of everything around it. They really marketed him well.

OLAF KOLZIG, G: 'Ace' was really an easy guy to get along with. He was very easygoing, very laid back.

KEITH ALLAIN, GOALIE COACH: He absolutely didn't come out of nowhere. That may be the perception some people have, but it is not the case. The year before that was the lockout year. He was in contention for major awards in the AHL and the NHL in his first year out of college. He had a great year in Portland. Then when the NHL started up again he came up and played the bulk of the games for us and he was pretty good.

STARBURST

CAREY HAD A SEASON TO REMEMBER 20 YEARS AGO. THEN INJURIES AND A LACK OF INTEREST KILLED HIS CAREER

BY **MIKE BROPHY**

KOLZIG: You just sat back in awe watching what he was doing when he first came into the league. I was a first-round pick who was still trying to get some traction as far as a pro career in the NHL was concerned. To see this kid come in and make it look like it was peewee hockey was frustrating for me.

TOD BUTTON, ASSISTANT COACH: His Vezina season he came in and was just a very good first-shot goalie. He was big and athletic and filled the net well.



DALE HUNTER, C: We played a tight game. 'Schoeny' (coach Jim Schoenfeld) believed in blocking shots and playing the right way. Carey had to make the big saves when we needed him, and that's the reason he won the Vezina.

BUTTON: His demeanor on the ice was similar to off it in that he was so calm and poised. It gave the team confidence. Even if he gave up a weak goal, he never got rattled, and in turn the team never did. He had this economy of motion and really understood angles and playing big, well before all these goalie gurus came in and started making it a go-to style.

ALLAIN: He was a really nice young man, the kind of guy who stayed to himself, and he was very serious about his game. He thought hard about the position. The goaltending position hadn't changed yet, either. He was more of a standup guy who was really concerned with his positioning on every shot. He was a stickler for that, and he did a heck of a job controlling rebounds. The puck just stuck to him like Velcro. When he was on there was just never a second shot with Jim.

Goalies are known to be cut from a different cloth than skaters, and Carey was no exception. Long before Jonathan Toews became known as 'Captain Serious,' there was Carey.

JONES: I don't remember him being an overly superstitious guy, but he wasn't like Marty Brodeur in that you weren't talking to him on the day of a game. We let him focus on what he had to do.

HUNTER: He was a real quiet guy...a really good guy. We used to go out for meals together. Back when I played with him, he was serious. It was like he was older than he actually was. He was so serious you'd think he was 30, but he was a kid.

KOLZIG: We were in the dressing room, and Dale Hunter was sitting across from us on the other side of the room. Dale was 35 at the time, and I remember Ace making a comment that he couldn't see himself still playing hockey when he got to 'Hunt's' age. Dale would play until they told him he couldn't anymore. Ace never saw himself doing that.

The Capitals won the first two games of the playoffs against Pittsburgh, but Carey didn't play well and was replaced by Kolzig. Carey went 0-1 with a 6.19 GAA and .744 SP, and Washington lost the series in six games.

JONES: When Jim got pulled early in the playoffs it showed that even Schoenfeld was thinking his success wasn't as much about him as it was the way the team was playing in front of him. That was always the sense we had, and seeing that quick trigger kind of played into the way we were thinking. It



all fell apart fast. I think the playoff series against Pittsburgh crushed his spirit.

ALLAIN: We were functioning on all cylinders to get the lead in the series, and the Penguins were one of those teams that figured they could ease into the playoffs and then turn it on. We were playing at our highest level, but then they kicked it up a notch, and we didn't have an answer for that. I don't think it was a Jim Carey thing. It was the Washington Capitals playing a superior Pittsburgh team.

JONES: He had a certain quiet confidence about him that year. Then in the playoffs, we lost against Pittsburgh like we usually did. Mario (Lemieux) and the Penguins lit him up high on his glove side. I don't know if he was ever the same after that.

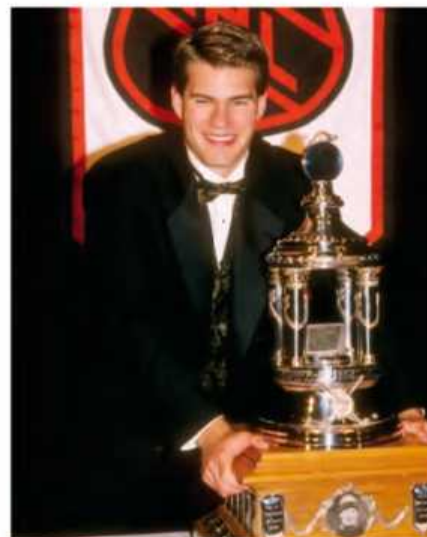
Carey was traded to Boston the following season, and he went 5-13-0 with the Bruins. He bounced between Boston and AHL Providence the year after that. His final NHL stop came in 1998-99 with the St. Louis Blues. He played three games with them.

BUTTON: I was shocked at how quickly it went south for him. I thought we were going to have a long run with him.

JONES: I don't know that he really loved the game. I'd hate to pin somebody with that label, but I remember thinking to myself back then, "I wonder how much he really likes it?" There are some guys that just don't enjoy it. They're good at it or even great at it, which makes sense, but at the same time they don't have much passion for it.

KOLZIG: I don't think becoming an NHL player was something he looked at long term. It was more of a way to make a good salary and be able to set himself up for his post-hockey career. To each their own. I wouldn't say he lived and died the game. He didn't eat, sleep and breathe the game.

ALLAIN: If you ask me why he didn't have



'ACE' IN THE NO. 1 HOLE

Carey had only just turned 22 when he won the Vezina Trophy in 1995-96.

a long career in hockey, I don't think he enjoyed it as much as he could have. I think that was the real thing. It's so hard to play goaltender in the NHL. It's physically and mentally draining.

KOLZIG: Once Ace was out of hockey, he was out of hockey. I don't think he wanted to interact with it anymore. I don't think he wanted to answer questions about his career. He's probably sick of being asked, "What happened?"...I watched this kid come in, and I was in awe. I was also frustrated. You see this kid who has this incredible talent. He made it look so easy. If he really wanted it and loved the game, he probably could have had one hell of a career.

The Hockey News reached out to Carey for an interview, but he did not respond. THEN



The Hockey News

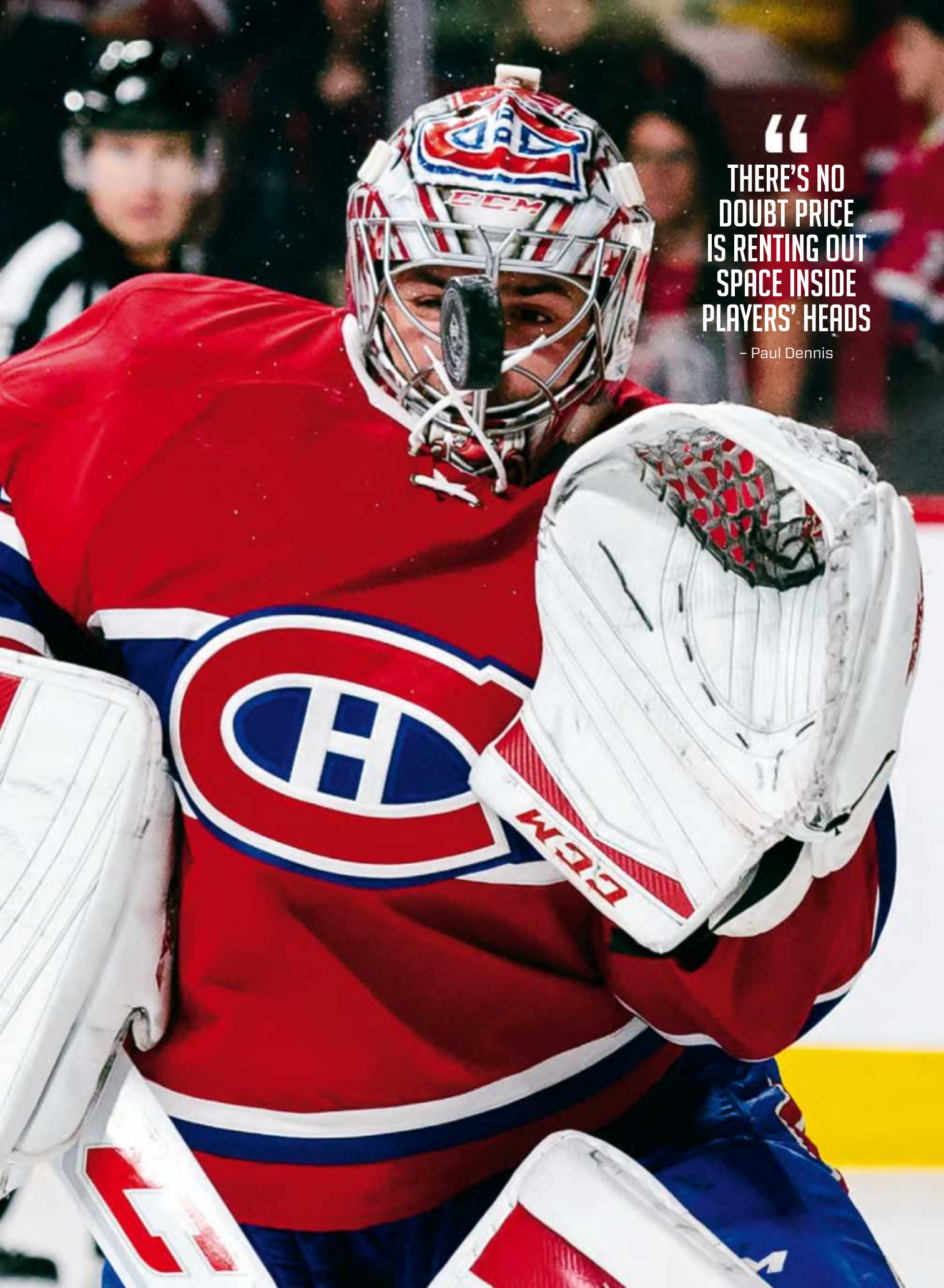
GOALIE RANKINGS

PRICE IN A LEAGUE OF HIS OWN AMONG NHL'S BEST MASKED MARAUDERS BY KEN CAMPBELL

When Ken Hitchcock stood behind the visitors' bench against the Montreal Canadiens in October, he watched his St. Louis Blues fire 17 pucks at Carey Price in the first period. He stood and pondered how his team could be outchancing the Canadiens so badly and still be losing. As the game went on, he watched his players shake their heads and look to the heavens. He saw their energy ebb and resignation take over their body language, becoming more discouraged as each of their 38 shots found their way into that sea of red in the Montreal net.

It was right around then Hitchcock made his own determination about Price and his impact on the game. "As a sportsman it's nice to see," he said, "but as a competitor, it's the s--ts."

What we're witnessing right now with Price is the emergence of an athlete who's beginning to transcend his sport. There is no debate Price is the best goaltender in the NHL, and by extension, the world. As far as his impact on the game, however, he's starting to find his way into that rarified status occupied by the likes of Tom Brady, Joe Montana, Michael Jordan and Dominik Hasek. He is so dominant at his position that he is be-



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THERE'S NO
DOUBT PRICE
IS RENTING OUT
SPACE INSIDE
PLAYERS' HEADS

– Paul Dennis

coming the focal point of his opponents' efforts, often to their detriment. "There's no doubt he's renting out space inside players' heads," said longtime sports psychologist Paul Dennis.

Price is doing now what Hasek did in his prime. On Feb. 20, 1998, in Nagano, Japan, Canada was playing the Czech Republic, and Hasek was at the height of his powers. He was not only in the Canadian players' kitchens. He was helping himself to everything in their fridges. Canada was passing up shots, playing tentatively and looking for the perfect scoring chance. The Canadians finished regulation with 22 shots on goal, and by the time they got to the shootout, they might as well have been trying to score with manhole covers.

Two months later, Sean Burke had been dealt to the Philadelphia Flyers at the trade deadline. As the season wound down, he kept noticing in the dressing room how his teammates continued to put pressure on themselves to finish second in the Eastern Conference to avoid finishing third and a meeting with the sixth-place Buffalo Sabres and Hasek. The Flyers lost three of their last four games, met the Sabres in the first round and, despite having home-ice advantage, were crushed 4-1 by Buffalo in the series. "We were mentally beaten already," Burke said. "We didn't want to face him, and it became a total mental thing for us."

And that's perhaps where Price has his biggest advantage over opponents. It's not so much in terms of the actual game action where players are shooting when they should be passing, passing when they should be shooting or zigging when they should be zagging. It's in the total team approach to facing him. Price is at a stage where teams are becoming so focused on trying to beat him they forget the Canadians are a pretty good team even without him in the net. "I know that after we played them, we were kicking ourselves for spending all our time talking about the opposing goalie," Hitchcock said.

Dennis said it can be a huge advantage for the Canadians. Players who rise to the ranks of the NHL do so for many reasons. One of them is a sublime level of skill, another is mental toughness and determination. But one of the big ones is their ability to eliminate distractions and focus on the task at hand. When Price enters the equation, he becomes exactly that – an unwanted and unneeded distraction. In addition to having to make plays and put themselves in a posi-

tion to score goals, opponents have to think about how they're going to get the puck past Price once they accomplish all those things.

Dennis' advice to teams and players in the NHL is to basically ignore the reigning MVP and best goalie in the world. "I'm not an NHL coach, but if I were and I were preparing my team, I don't think I'd focus a lot on a Carey Price, because it brings more tension to an already tense situation," Dennis said. "I'd focus on what we do really well and 'this is how we're going to exploit the Canadians and get scoring opportunities.' And I would stop there. I wouldn't reinforce how good he is in my players' minds. They already know that. I'm not going to state the obvious."

By virtue of the position he plays, Price is always going to have a significant impact on the outcome of the game, either positively (usually) or negatively (rarely). It's no different, really, than facing a superstar such as Wayne Gretzky or Mario Lemieux in his

prime. Those who were around Price with the Canadian Olympic team in Sochi marvelled at how easy he makes a very difficult game look. Even though you could count on one hand the number of goals Canada gave up in that tournament, it's not always easy to keep your focus, particularly when the stakes are so high. Hitchcock said he knew Price was special after Canada's 2-1 win over Latvia when Canada was hitting posts, missing open

nets and continually being thwarted by a virtual unknown at the other end named Kristers Gudlevskis. But in that game, Price had to make at least a half dozen highlight-reel saves himself. Had he allowed a soft goal or not been at the top of his game, what Price does to shooters might have happened to his own team facing Gudlevskis. That he did it so calmly was what impressed those around him.

Detroit Red Wings GM Ken Holland was one of those people who had a front-row seat for Price's exploits in Sochi. He opines that there are so many good players in the NHL it's difficult to distinguish yourself as a difference maker. But Price has done that by determining the outcome of games. Holland isn't sure whether Price is in his Wing players' heads, but he is certain of one thing. "I know he's in my head," Holland said. "He puts pressure on the other goalie. He puts pressure on the other team. At the same time, he gives confidence to his team because he's the last line of defense. And he's the best last line of defense in the league."

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WE WERE KICKING
OURSELVES FOR
SPENDING ALL
OUR TIME TALKING
ABOUT PRICE

– Ken Hitchcock

THN'S TOP 40

The Hockey News submitted a list of 40 NHL goaltenders – 30 starters plus our picks for the 10 best backups – to 10 retired NHL goaltenders. We asked them to rate each goalie in five different categories: goalie sense (positioning, angles, general hockey IQ); athleticism; puckhandling; winnability (trustworthiness in a do-or-die game); and durability (health and ability to handle large workload). Ex-NHL goaltender and goalie coach Corey Hirsch came up with the five categories. Here are the overall results:

NAME	RATING
Carey Price	8.80
Pekka Rinne	8.24
Jonathan Quick	8.21
Henrik Lundqvist	8.16
Braden Holtby	7.81
Marc-Andre Fleury	7.68
Mike Smith	7.61
Tuukka Rask	7.54
Corey Crawford	7.41
Roberto Luongo	7.41
Ryan Miller	7.34
Ben Bishop	7.27
Petr Mrazek	7.23
Cory Schneider	7.23
Jake Allen	7.07
Sergei Bobrovsky	6.93
Semyon Varlamov	6.90
Antti Niemi	6.89
Martin Jones	6.87
Michael Hutchinson	6.84
Frederik Andersen	6.77
Devan Dubnyk	6.71
Steve Mason	6.63
Cam Ward	6.63
Cam Talbot	6.63
Brian Elliott	6.59
Craig Anderson	6.57
Scott Darling	6.54
Jimmy Howard	6.51
Eddie Lack	6.50
Ondrej Pavelec	6.48
Thomas Greiss	6.46
Michal Neuvirth	6.43
Andrei Vasilevskiy	6.20
Jaroslav Halak	6.18
Kari Lehtonen	6.07
Andrew Hammond	6.07
Jonas Hiller	5.96
Robin Lehner	5.92
Jonathan Bernier	5.88

GOALIE SENSE

HENRIK LUNDQVIST

LUNDQVIST PLAYS THE GAME LIKE HE WEARS HIS SUITS – WITH PERFECT STYLE AND PRECISION

BY JOSH ELLIOTT

Fans call him the ‘King,’ but Henrik Lundqvist prefers to play the role of the good soldier, using his keen hockey mind to alter the game to the Rangers’ advantage. He turns 34 in March, but he moves fast and thinks faster thanks to an incredible hockey sense that has only improved over his 10-plus seasons in the NHL. “He excels at save selection based on the situation,” said former goalie-turned-broadcaster Darren Eliot. “He’s refined his game over the years, but his ability to read the play and react accordingly has always been elite.”

Lundqvist had a stellar start to the season, showing none of the wear and tear that can affect goalies his age. If the years have done anything, they’ve only sharpened the way he thinks the game and made him a more supportive teammate for his defensemen.

For instance, when it comes to playing the puck, Lundqvist has learned to pick and choose which dump-ins to try to knock down instead of going after them all. That allows him to protect his defensemen from being hit by aggressive forecheckers while avoiding getting caught out of position himself. “My first few years here, I’d just play the puck no matter what,” he said, “but now I actually try to take the time to read the situation and help out a little bit more.”

His puckhandling skills will never match those of Arizona’s Mike Smith (see pg. 35), but Lundqvist takes fewer gambles and tends to make smarter decisions when he does play the puck. It’s rare to see him cough up the puck from behind the net to an opposing forward. He tries to listen to everything his defensemen say to him during each play, so he can make the best decision possible. “You depend a lot on communication with your D-men, to know where they are,



PROTECTIVE INSTINCT

Lundqvist works hard to communicate with his defensemen and help them avoid big hits.

and if you’re under pressure or not,” Lundqvist said.

One reason why Lundqvist’s “goalie sense” metric rated so highly in the THN poll: his superb positioning. “He’s the best in the league at ‘box control,’ the angle toward the puck,” said one former NHL goaltender who voted. “He’s very good at reading the rush and options coming toward him. He has powerful lateral movement and does not overplay initial shots, so it gives him an opportunity for the rebound.”

“**HE’S THE BEST IN THE LEAGUE AT BOX CONTROL, THE ANGLE TOWARD THE PUCK**

– Retired NHL goalie

THE TOP 5

AVG RATING



Carey Price
Montreal Canadiens

9.56



Henrik Lundqvist
New York Rangers

9.28



Pekka Rinne
Nashville Predators

8.61



Ryan Miller
Vancouver Canucks

8.33



Roberto Luongo
Florida Panthers

8.22

ATHLETICISM

A WACKY FINNISH PASTIME HELPED SHAPE RINNE INTO A HUMAN HIGHLIGHT REEL

BY MATT LARKIN

Ever heard of Pesapallo? Pekka Rinne recommends YouTubeing it. It's Finland's version of baseball, and it's delightfully bananas to watch as a newcomer.

The pitcher stands about a foot from the batter and tosses the ball straight up, so it clears a one-meter minimum above his head. The pitcher quickly bails out of the way so the batter can take a violent swing. The batter runs the bases in a zigzag pattern before looping back for a sprint to home. It's about 100 years old, and it's a fast, furious game. It would eat someone with Babe Ruth's body type alive. It requires speed, agility, athleticism and catching ability. Or, in other words, all the skills Rinne possesses.

He played Pesapallo into his teens, and it molded him into one of the world's quickest, most athletic goaltenders. That and years of mimicking the movements of his favorites, from Miikka Kiprusoff to Dominik Hasek. Rinne couldn't watch live NHL games growing up in Kempele, Finland, but would excitedly devour highlight packages aired every Saturday morning.

Rinne is 6-foot-5 and 217 pounds but as graceful as a gazelle. He excelled in soccer and track and field as a youngster, too. When you understand he's athletic, period, not just athletic for a goalie, it's no wonder Rinne rates so highly on the athleticism metric in THN's poll. "He's one of the best athletes I've ever coached," said Predators coach Peter Laviolette. "Even when you're technically sound like he is, there are always times when you have to figure out how to make a second save or a third save, and I really feel like that's where his athleticism comes through. He makes all the saves he's supposed to, but then there are ones where he has to do something spectacular, and you really appreciate him more for the job he does. He never quits on anything, and he gives it the best effort he can on every shot."

Rinne knows how nimble he is and how much of an advantage it gives him in conjunction with his huge frame. He also works hard on his conditioning every summer to make sure he has a ceaseless motor and maximizes



SKILL 'N' THRILL

As a kid, Rinne played a wild game called Pesapallo. It resembles baseball but requires a tremendous amount of athletic ability.

his ability. As a total package, he's almost unfair. It's no wonder he's a three-time Vezina Trophy finalist and two-time runner up.

Not that he gives himself much credit, though. In Rinne's eyes, he's only as good as his goaltending coaches. His nine-year marriage to goalie guru Mitch Korn helped him become a breakout star.

Korn recognized Rinne's glove was so good that he relied on it too much and got beat on the blocker side too often. Korn also calmed him down and helped him be more patient instead of clamoring for the puck and reacting too early. And Ben Vanderklok, who took over in Nashville when Korn went to Washington, has transitioned smoothly into a partnership with Rinne. "He's been very helpful," Rinne said. "He sees the game the same way as Mitch does, if you will, and really has followed Mitch's footsteps in that sense. That's a really great thing for myself. I haven't had to change anything. We have just been trying to evolve and improve where I left off with Mitch."

Rinne never stops trying to improve. He works with a second goalie coach, Finnish League vet Ari Hilli, every summer to stay sharp. Rinne, 33, had hip surgery in 2013-14, so he also understands he must stay limber to capitalize on his athleticism. He thus turns to yoga on his recovery days. "It's something that helps the mental part of your game, too," he said. "Just being able to focus on yourself, focus on what's important and to slow things down."

Slow things down? About the last words you'd expect to hear from one of the fastest goalies on Earth.

THE TOP 5		AVG RATING
	Jonathan Quick Los Angeles Kings	9.33
	Pekka Rinne Nashville Predators	9.17
	Marc-Andre Fleury Pittsburgh Penguins	8.94
	Carey Price Montreal Canadiens	8.83
	Henrik Lundqvist New York Rangers	8.50

JOANTHAN DANIEL/GETTY IMAGES

TUUKKA RASK

DURABILITY

RASK IS NO FRAIL FINN. LONG AND LEAN, HE KNOWS HOW TO TRAIN FOR A FULL SEASON

BY MIKE LOFTUS

Looking back, Tuukka Rask understands why everyone made such a fuss a few years ago. Long, lanky and, most important, young, Rask hadn't been able to hang onto the No. 1 job he took from Tim Thomas as a 22-year-old rookie in 2009-10. Instead, he spent the next two years in a backup role. "When it's your first time doing something, when you don't have that experience, you handle things differently," Rask said. "You let yourself get high and low, you can't stay even. That's probably what happened."

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I GUESS PEOPLE WERE QUESTIONING IF I COULD PLAY 60, 70 GAMES

– Tuukka Rask

It hasn't happened since. For the past two seasons, Rask has made a minimum of 70 appearances (playoffs included), reaching the Stanley Cup final in 2013, which started with 17 games in the Czech Republic during the lockout, winning a Vezina Trophy in 2014 and tying a franchise record with 70 regular season outings last season in the process. "I guess people were questioning if I could play 60, 70 games," Rask said. "It was just a matter of proving it."

Rask had so little doubt he could handle the rigors of being a No. 1 that he signed a one-year contract at relatively little money (\$3.5 million) prior to 2012-13, betting he'd earn a long-term, big-bucks deal. He then put up a strong regular season, followed by a 1.88 goals-against average over 22 consecutive playoff appearances, and signed an eight-year, \$56-million pact. A year later he grabbed the Vezina, along with first team all-star honors.

So how does a 6-foot-3 goalie who usually weighs around 175 pounds hold up the way Rask does? "Take care of your body," he said.

TIME FOR SOME SHUTEYE

Although it's harder to come by now with his baby girl, Rask puts a premium on sleep.

"You have to be in good shape to begin with, but when you talk about playing 60, 70 games, rest is a huge factor – that, and what you do at the gym. You can't be lifting heavy weights a lot, but you have to maintain your strength and keep your muscles as loose as possible."

Rest, both physical and mental, was an issue last season, when coach Claude Julien didn't have full faith in backup Niklas Svedberg. Veteran Jonas Gustavsson now has the No. 2 job, so Rask shouldn't be overtaxed.

Good thing. His preferred method of rest – good old-fashioned shuteye – faces a big challenge from a little girl: Rask, now 28, and girlfriend Jasmiina brought Vivien into the world this year. "For me, sleep is big, and it's not so easy any more," he said smiling. "But it's all good."

THE TOP 5

AVG RATING



Cory Schneider
New Jersey Devils

8.44



Braden Holtby
Washington Capitals

8.33



Marc-Andre Fleury
Pittsburgh Penguins

8.28



Henrik Lundqvist
New York Rangers

8.22



Tuukka Rask
Boston Bruins

8.22

WINNABILITY

KINGS DON'T KNOW WHAT 'IT' IS. ALL THEY KNOW IS QUICK IS AS CLUTCH AS THEY COME

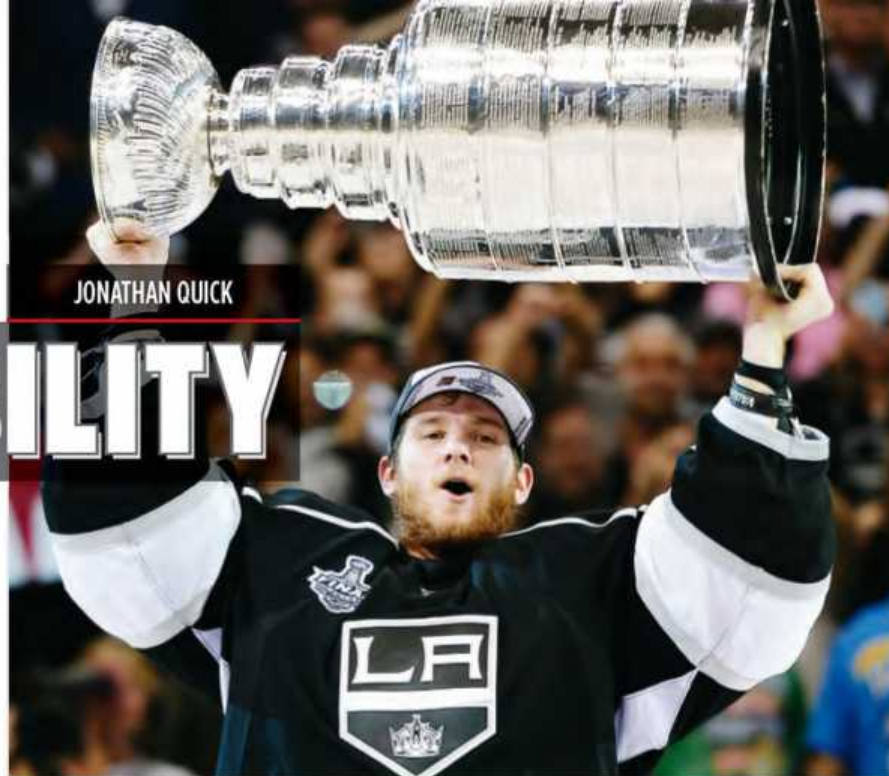
BY KEN CAMPBELL

Of the hundreds of conversations Los Angeles Kings GM Dean Lombardi has had with Jonathan Quick over the years, two of them in particular stand out.

The first was during 2006-07 when Lombardi was in his first season as GM of a team that was en route to finishing with the third-worst record in the NHL. Lombardi and assistant GM Ron Hextall went to watch Quick play for the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. The Kings has drafted him 72nd overall in 2005, and he was in his sophomore year. After the game, Hextall asked Quick how he thought he had played that night. "I got the 'W,'" was Quick's terse response.

The second was the morning of April 23, 2014. The Kings had just lost Game 3 of their first-round series against the San Jose Sharks in overtime and were faced with the prospect of becoming the fourth team in NHL history to come back from a 3-0 deficit to win the series. Quick had been less-than-stellar to awful, allowing 16 goals and posting a save percentage of .852. Things were looking grim, to say the least. "He just said to me, 'Dean, I've got this,'" Lombardi recalled. "If there was ever anyone who was going to tell me that and I'd believe it, he'd be the guy. And damned if he didn't."

All Quick did was post a save percentage of .963 in the next four games. In Game 7, he allowed a goal on the first shot of the game, then stopped each of the next 39 to send the Kings to the Western Conference final and then to their second Stanley Cup in three years. It was that run that cemented Quick as among the best clutch goalies in the NHL. The old barstool question about which goalie you'd want if you had to win one game for



JONATHAN QUICK

everything has to have Quick at or near the top of the list. The hockey world has been having a love affair with Carey Price for the better part of the past year, but at last count Quick has two more Stanley Cups. When asked whether that bothers him or his goalie, Lombardi posed a question of his own. "What, you mean the obvious East Coast bias that if they were in different cities this would not be an issue?" Lombardi said.

Yeah, something like that. But it's not as though Quick is not getting his due. Ray Shero has spent his entire career as a GM in the Eastern Conference and is well aware of how good Quick is. As one of the decision makers for Team USA's World Cup team, Shero knows how Quick can impact the outcome of a game. And the bigger the game, the bigger the impact. "To beat him in a series is tough," Shero said. "The way L.A. plays the game, and with Quick there, that's a little intimidating. 'Quickie' is one of those guys who when he's not stopping the puck doesn't look right, but when he's playing as he can he's one of the best in the league."

Skill is obviously a huge part of Quick's success. So is his even-keeled demeanor that never seems to get above a simmer. But even Lombardi isn't sure exactly what it is that makes his goaltender stare down the best shooters in the world when it counts most and come out on top. "If we could define that, bottle it, create a formula for it,

NEVER IN DOUBT

After the Kings went down 3-0 in their 2014 first-round series against the Sharks, Quick told Lombardi, "Dean, I've got this."

we'd all be pretty wealthy," Lombardi said. "He has that special quality that certain athletes have that allows him to rise to the occasion when the stakes are the highest. It's one of those things, you can't define it, but you know it when you see it and when you feel it."

“ HE HAS THAT SPECIAL QUALITY THAT CERTAIN ATHLETES HAVE THAT ALLOWS HIM TO RISE TO THE OCCASION

— Dean Lombardi

THE TOP 5		AVG RATING
	Carey Price Montreal Canadiens	9.22
	Henrik Lundqvist New York Rangers	8.94
	Jonathan Quick Los Angeles Kings	8.83
	Corey Crawford Chicago Blackhawks	8.83
	Pekka Rinne Nashville Predators	8.33



MIKE SMITH

PUCKHANDLING

SMITH DOESN'T TREAT THE PUCK LIKE IT'S TOO HOT TO HANDLE. CONFIDENCE IS HIS KEY

BY SARAH MCLELLAN

During a pause in every practice, Mike Smith will scoop up a loose puck and send it toward the net at the other end of the ice. The opportunity to make that shot rarely pops up in a game, though when it did Oct. 19, 2003, Smith converted with 0.1 seconds remaining to become the seventh goaltender in NHL history to score a goal by shooting the puck into the net.

More often than not, however, Smith uses his familiarity with the black disk to make passes. And he's one of the best goalies with the puck on his stick.

Smith executes short saucers to his defensemen with precision, which prevent opponents from establishing a forecheck, and his lengthy tape-to-tape outlets help ignite the Coyotes' offense in the other direction. "Teams are getting used to goalies handling the pucks," Smith said. "Now it's getting harder to make plays with it, but all in all it's just about being consistent with it and trying to help your defense out."

Smith liked to roam even in his junior days, but back then the bulk of his maneuvering included flipping the puck around the boards. It wasn't until he was drafted 161st overall in 2001 by Dallas and watched Stars starter Marty Turco actively pursue and play the puck that Smith decided to morph this tendency into a skill.

After four seasons in the minors, Smith graduated to backup status in 2006-07 and started to study Turco's style. Smith changed his grip on the stick, switching from an underneath grab like skaters use to an over-the-top hold that Turco utilized.

Smith also learned resiliency. In one particular game, he left his crease to play the puck, mishandled it and the turnover ended up in the net before he could regain his positioning. On the next dump-in, Smith stayed in his crease, and the change didn't go unnoticed. "Get back out

MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

Smith's puckhandling skills led to a goal in 2003, making him one of only seven goalies to shoot and score in NHL history.

there and play it like you can," Smith recalled Turco telling him during a timeout. "Mistakes are going to happen."

Even now, as a 33-year-old veteran of more than 400 regular season and playoff games, Smith still works on his puckhandling. And if a gaffe happens in a game, it probably means he hasn't put as much time working on it recently as he should. "The big point that Marty made was you can't go out with fear," Smith said. "It's something that you have to have, that swagger and confidence, that when you go out to play you're going to make the right play. Sometimes it doesn't work out that way, but you have to go out with the mindset that you're going to make the right play." **THE**

“IT'S JUST ABOUT BEING CONSISTENT AND TRYING TO HELP YOUR DEFENSE

– Mike Smith

THE TOP 5

AVG RATING



Mike Smith
Arizona Coyotes

9.39



Carey Price
Montreal Canadiens

8.72



Ben Bishop
Tampa Bay Lightning

8.22



Jake Allen
St. Louis Blues

7.44



Pekka Rinne
Nashville Predators

7.22



NHL TEAM R



BEARING DOWN ON MARTY & PATTY

Roughly halfway through his burgeoning career, Fleury is on a trajectory to challenge the win totals of his idols, Brodeur and Roy

BY SHELLY ANDERSON

WITH HIS FLEXIBLE BODY, omnipresent smile and an infectious joie de vivre, Marc-Andre Fleury seems eternally young. Truth is, he turned 31 Nov. 28, and he's had to make some adjustments. "I used to not stretch at all, and I could do the splits no problem," he said. "Now I've got to work at it a little harder."

Nowadays, his ritual before he takes the ice includes a stretching routine. He's made some other tweaks in his preparation and his performance, many of them an outgrowth of his work with third-year goaltending coach Mike Bales.

Indications are that Fleury, though getting older, is still getting better. That raises some questions about what his legacy will be and where his place in history might be when he hangs up his skates, which seemingly won't be for years to come.

A crunch of the numbers says Fleury could finish elbow pad to elbow pad with the very best, at least in the category of wins. A month into this season, Fleury was among the league leaders with seven victories, despite mostly putrid goal support, after starting 12 of the team's first 14 games. For his career, he ranked 23rd all-time with 329 wins.

Ed Belfour, in third place with 484 wins, is within reach by the time Fleury turns 35. Then come the heavyweights. Patrick Roy is No. 2 with 551 wins, Martin Brodeur No. 1 with 691. "They were both my idols," Fleury said. "They both had great careers, a lot of wins, Stanley Cups. I remember how much they won. That's something you define people with – how much they won – right?"

Perhaps Fleury can stamp his name alongside them, in some yet-to-be-determined order. "That would be very impressive if he gets up into that territory," Bales said.

It would be Hall of Fame territory to be sure.

In his seven full seasons – Fleury has missed time to a high ankle sprain, league work stoppages and a stretch in the AHL – he has averaged 37.6 wins. After the first month this season, he was on pace to win 41 games.

If Fleury wins 38 games this season, it would put him at 360 for his career. If he then could average 37 over nine more seasons, taking him to age 40, he would be at 693, two ahead of Brodeur's all-time mark.

Using 360 as a starting point following this season, if Fleury averages 30 wins for nine more campaigns, he would be at 620. If he averages 30 for seven more seasons, he would be at 560 wins, nine more than Roy. Even if Fleury averages 30 for just five more seasons, he would still reach 500.

Barring injury, Fleury could pretty easily catch Roy, at least. "I don't know about easily," Fleury interjected.

Two of his high-profile teammates, center Sidney Crosby and defenseman Kris Letang, both 28, said they would be thrilled to have Fleury as their starting goalie for the entirety of their careers. They envision him playing to 40 if not beyond, should he choose to. "Oh, yeah, he can," Letang said. "I don't know why not."

Crosby was helping out at a world juniors camp as a teenager when he first met Fleury, who at 16 was one of Team

REPORTS

Canada's goalies in waiting. "I remember him being pretty nice to me then, and I was just a kid working a camp," Crosby said. "We ended up playing world juniors together three years later. It was funny the way things worked out."

"He's in really good shape. He takes care of himself. He works hard at it. I don't think people realize how hard it is year after year to be a starting goalie and to deal with the pressure that comes with that, the length of the season and amount of games he plays. It's amazing what he's been able to do."

Fleury insisted he hasn't thought about how long he wants to play. He only hopes he will be able to leave on his terms. "I still love the game and,

ALL ABOUT THE 'W'

Fleury is on pace to be among the top three winningest goalies in history by the time he's 35.

hopefully, I can play until I decide I want to stop, whenever that is," he said.

Roy played until he was 37. Brodeur until he was 42.

The only active goalies ahead of Fleury in career victories are Florida's Roberto Luongo, who is five years Fleury's senior, and the Rangers' Henrik Lundqvist, who is two years older. Vancouver's Ryan Miller is right there with Fleury in the wins column, but Miller, too, is older, by four years.

Fleury could be expected to crack the top 20 by around Christmas, as Lundqvist did last season. Gump Worsley is 20th at 335.

As with many goaltenders, Fleury's trajectory still seems to be headed up as he gets into his 30s, while conventional wisdom holds that skaters peak at some point in their mid 20s. And his start this season backs that up. After a month,



Fleury had a 1.93 goals-against average and .933 save percentage, better than his numbers from any of his full seasons. "Marc's at that age where everything is starting to come together," Bales said. "He has that experience, knows the patterns. It's so instinctual. Add that to the technical and tactical parts of his game and his physical skills."

Pittsburgh made Fleury the first overall pick in 2003. In his early years, he was known for his cat-like moves – acrobatic, flexibility-testing saves.

FIRE-SIDE CHAT

Fleury has always been one of the game's most likeable and approachable players.

While he maintains that ability, he doesn't have to rely on it as much. "When he came into the league, he was making it really hard on himself," Letang said. "Now he's more calm in the net, and every year he improves."

Long-time observers have seen Fleury get better in the areas of positioning, reading the play, play on the posts, footwork and rebound control. "I'm not getting younger," Fleury said, "but you get experience."

One record he won't even come close to is Brodeur's record 125 shutouts. Fleury would have to nearly double the 40 he had just to crack the top 10.

He also has been the focus of criticism for his post-season performance in recent years, with some blame heaped on him for the fact the Penguins' core of stars has won just one Stanley Cup (2009), which Fleury was instrumental in, most notably with his lunging save on Detroit's Nicklas Lidstrom in the final seconds of Game 7.

If Fleury is blessed with longevity, he will take a run at that all-time wins mark. "I can't say I'm surprised," Crosby said. **THEN**





UNDER THE KNIFE, INTO THE CREASE

Surgery didn't stop Ullmark from making an early mark in Buffalo – and looking 'despicable' in the process

DDOUBLE HIP SURGERY WAS SUPPOSED to delay Linus Ullmark's arrival in the Sabres' crease. It actually sped it up.

While the new-look Sabres got to know each other during training camp, a few of Buffalo's coaches got to know Ullmark. The 22-year-old Swedish import wasn't cleared to practice because of the April surgeries, so he worked on the side and received individual tutoring. The Sabres were impressed. "He's a real student of the game, and you can tell that he put the time in – not just working on his on-ice but the mental side of it and analyzing different game situations," goaltending coach Andrew Allen said. "He's a pro."

The Sabres figured the 6-foot-4 Ullmark, who spent the previous two seasons with Modo in the Swedish League, could make an NHL impact during his first year in North America. So when new No. 1 goalie Robin Lehner suffered a severe ankle sprain during the season opener, Buffalo didn't panic. Rather than acquire an experienced netminder to split time with career backup Chad Johnson, the Sabres waited for Ullmark's return to health in mid-October and promptly sent him to the

crease. "We were hoping he'd be able to get here and get in net for us," coach Dan Bylsma said. "When you watch him prepare and warm up, he's very calm and very relaxed."

With Lehner on the shelf for six to 10 weeks, Ullmark is getting the chance to live out a dream. He spent much of his childhood watching YouTube videos of Dominik Hasek, and now he's playing in front of the same net as the Hall of Famer. "You're always thinking about this growing up, and now I'm here and I'm really excited for it," Ullmark said. "It's not what I expected from the season to start, but it's just fun to be here. It's a great opportunity for me to be able to play with these guys and practice with them and try to learn something every day."

Ullmark, a sixth-round pick by Buffalo in 2012, looked shaky in his debut and failed to keep up with the speed of play during a 4-3 loss to New Jersey. He caught up quickly, however, winning his next two starts by stopping 56 of 58 shots while sporting an eye-catching Minions mask. "I feel a bit more comfortable out there," he said. "I know how we play and what I need to do to take the shots." — **JOHN VOGL**

BEST GOALIE PROSPECT



He's still Anaheim's future No. 1 in net, but **John Gibson** is working toward the designation farther down the coastline in San Diego. Gibson, 22, spent a good chunk of the past two seasons in the NHL and even played in four playoff games in 2014. But the Ducks would like him to play full-time in the AHL rather than part-time in the NHL.



The Coyotes had seven picks in the first three rounds of 2015 and used the 76th selection on a big goalie from Calgary. **Adin Hill** went unclaimed in his draft year of 2014 as he battled injury and played just 19 games of Jr. A. But he shone as a 19-year-old with WHL Portland (31 wins and .921 SP), and he's been even better this season.



After starting the season on the injury list, **Malcolm Subban** got his first start at the end of October. After two years in which he played 33 and 35 games, respectively, Subban will carry much of the load in Providence. The Bruins signed Jonas Gustavsson as Tuukka Rask's backup so Subban could get a full season of pro as a No. 1.



Ullmark is the Sabres' goalie of the future, but keep an eye on 22-year-old **Andrey Makarov**. He was passed over twice in the draft before the Sabres signed him in 2012. He has improved and impressed since, however, including being named best goalie at the 2013 Memorial Cup while with Saskatoon. He's currently in AHL Rochester.



Jon Gillies was consistently remarkable in three years at Providence College. After seasons of .931, .931 and .930 SP, the 6-foot-6, 225-pounder needed a higher bar and is getting it in AHL Stockton. He got off to a good start with two shutouts in his first three games. Also in the wings is Mason McDonald from Charlottetown (QMJHL).



BEST GOALIE PROSPECT



He doesn't have the height of fellow Canes projects Daniel Altshuler or Rasmus Tirronen, but **Alex Nedeljkovic** has made a habit of stealing games in his OHL career with Plymouth/Flint. The Ohio native also has a shot at Team USA's starting job for this year's World Junior Championship, though he'll have to snap out of a slow start to do so.



Goaltending depth isn't a strength among Chicago's prospects, but maybe **Ivan Nalimov** becomes something someday. He has great size and agility. He got his feet wet with Admiral Vladivostok in the KHL last year and opened 2015-16 as the starter. A strong year could earn him an entry-level deal and a trip to AHL Rockford.



Calvin Pickard has settled into Quad-A status: not quite an NHL starter but too good for the AHL. He was great in relief of injured Semyon Varlamov last year, but the Avs would rather see him play a lot in the minors. Varlamov has four years left on his deal. Will that make Pickard a trade target, like Cam Talbot and Martin Jones last summer?



It started off in exhibition play and carried on to Lake Erie: **Joonas Korpisalo** has been a gem so far. The Finnish fortress kicked off his first full AHL season with two shutouts, using his size and lateral movement to stymie shooters. When he got a chance to shine with Columbus, he did so, turning in a rave performance against the Penguins.



Will **Jack Campbell**, the 11th pick in 2010, ever play in the NHL? He's blocked on the depth chart with Kari Lehtonen and Antti Niemi inked through 2017-18. Worse yet, Campbell injured his blocker hand in camp and didn't suit up for AHL Texas in October. Maxime Lagace played well enough in relief to put the heat on once Campbell returns.



SWISS TIMING DOES THE TRICK

Berra's attributes focus on mental, physical sharpness for his early-season resurgence in the Colorado crease

SWISS GOALIE RETO BERRA HEARD the whispers. It didn't come from the Avalanche and he wasn't paying attention to its fans. But many European folks – especially in Switzerland – were suggesting he would have his NHL contract bought out last June, ending a turbulent two-year run in North America.

Thing is, Berra wasn't interested in that scenario and it never happened. The Avs stuck with him and, thus far this season, he's been a quality backup for Semyon Varlamov. In fact, Berra has had far better numbers than Varlamov after four starts – each on the road – through Nov. 4 (1.79 GAA, .944 SP). “People asked me if that could happen,” Berra said of the NHL's June buyout period. “People in Europe don't know how it works over here. Even teams from Switzerland were asking me. But I really never thought about it. I just worked hard, knowing I would have a good year wherever I might be.”

Colorado acquired Berra from Calgary in 2014 for a second-round pick, and the Avs gave him a three-year extension worth \$4.35 million (\$1.45 million cap hit). After signing the deal, Berra couldn't stop the puck. In two

games, his save percentage was .781.

As Varlamov's backup last season, Berra's struggles continued until young prospect Calvin Pickard was recalled when the starter was shelved three times with the same groin injury. Berra became Pickard's backup. “I at least had a good ending, with the shutout against Winnipeg,” said Berra, who finished with a respectable 2.65 GAA and .918 SP in 19 appearances. “Over the summer I worked really hard – physically, mentally, everything – and gave every day the best I have. It's all about consistency.”

Berra beat out Pickard, 23, for the backup job in camp, although Pickard is on a two-way deal and waiver exempt – so Colorado had financial gain in keeping Pickard down.

But Pickard was named AHL goalie of the month for October after leading San Antonio to a 5-0-1 record (1.79 GAA, .946 SP). He is again threatening to take Berra's job. “Although ‘Picks’ played great last season, they chose to keep me. But I know it can change any day,” Berra said. “He's a really good goalie and I have to really work every day to stay here, and that's what I'm doing.” – **MIKE CHAMBERS**



NOT SO CALM, NOT SO COOL

Dubnyk's numbers have dropped off from a year ago, but the most important stat for him and the Wild is wins

DEVAN DUBNYK FINALLY SHOWED HIS frustration. After allowing an overtime winner to Blues captain David Backes Oct. 31, the Wild goalie departed the St. Louis ice by slamming his stick across the bench, almost tripping through the door and then slamming his stick again.

It was a far cry from the cool, calm Dubnyk Wild fans grew accustomed to seeing during his brilliant second-half run last year – and especially the last time he was in St. Louis. The game was a tremendous 36-save, Game 5 victory last April that swung the tied playoff series, eventually won by Minnesota.

Dubnyk, 29, went 27-9-2 with a 1.78 goals-against average and .936 save percentage last season to save the Wild's bacon. He started 38 consecutive games, went 15-2-1 with a 1.53 GAA and .949 SP on the road, and was tremendous in back-to-back situations, particularly on the second nights.

It's a big reason why the 2004 Edmonton Oilers first-round pick (14th overall), who was traded twice two seasons ago and ended up in the minors with the Montreal Canadiens, won the Masterton Trophy and was a Vezina Trophy finalist – and why he was re-

warded with a six-year, \$26-million contract in June.

But this season, Dubnyk has looked mortal. He has a 2.59 goals-against average and .898 save percentage. It's part of the reason why the Wild, who are normally exceptional defensively, ranked 20th in goals against per game despite surrendering the seventh-fewest shots. "I told myself going into the year, I'm sure if it's not great, there's always going to be questions with how good it was last year," Dubnyk said. "It's a long year, and the most important thing is wins."

And that's the thing. Eleven games into the season, Dubnyk still hasn't lost consecutive regulation games in a Minnesota Wild sweater.

And, most importantly, he's 7-2-1 even though his play hasn't been up to last season's high standard. "What I love is we can all say 'Duby' hasn't been at his best, but what I can say is when he's needed to be at his best... closing out games, he's been his best," coach Mike Yeo said. "We can look at his goals-against average and save percentage, but one thing I always put first is wins and losses and he's doing pretty well in that regard." – **MICHAEL RUSSO**

BEST GOALIE PROSPECT



The fact **Jake Paterson** has started his pro career in the ECHL should not sound off enormous alarm bells, since a good number of netminders in that league have graduated to the NHL. After a solid season in the OHL, the two-time Canadian WJC goalie is learning the pro game and should push for an AHL job before long.



Top goalie prospect Laurent Brossoit's third pro season is off to a solid start with AHL Bakersfield (see pg. 53). He's entrenched as the starter. Finnish prospect **Eetu Laurikainen's** path to playing time is muddy, as the demotion of Edmonton's former NHL starter, Ben Scrivens, left the pair competing for backup duty with the Condors.



Part of a run of goaltenders drafted in the third round last June, **Samuel Montembeault** had an excellent regular season with Blainville-Boisbriand in the QMJHL before faltering in the playoffs. He owns an excellent glove hand and has good size at 6-foot-3, but he needs to put a lot more bulk on his frame over the next couple seasons.



Jonathan Quick is only 29, but L.A. should ponder an heir apparent for five to seven years down the road. There's not much in the system now. Peter Budaj and Ray Emery man the crease in the AHL, while Czech Patrik Bartosak, 22, is third string. The Kings didn't draft a goalie in 2015, but 2014 pick Alec Dillon is the backup in WHL Edmonton.



Kaapo Kahkonen, co-starter for the SM-liiga's Espoo Blues, is known for his confidence and for playing better the more shots he faces. He's such a strong puckhandler that scouts liken him to a third D-man. He scored a goal in Finland's second-tier league last year. He has a shot to prove his worth as the Finns' projected 2016 WJC starter.



BEST GOALIE PROSPECT



The Canadiens have a storied history of homegrown star goalies. Did we mention **Zach Fucale** is from Montreal? Last season, he went from the high of winning gold with Canada at the WJC to the low of a disastrous Memorial Cup with the Quebec Remparts. He's turned pro and has a lot of time to develop, given who Montreal's No. 1 is.



Juuse Saros is nothing like Pekka Rinne, even though they share Finnish citizenship. Saros is six inches shorter and 37 pounds lighter than Rinne. Still, Saros had great success as a Finnish world junior, earning gold in 2014. He's getting his first shot at the North American game with AHL Milwaukee, battling Marek Mazanec for starts.



Two decades of Marty Brodeur made goaltending a luxury in New Jersey, and Cory Schneider was an easy successor. Now, in OHL Barrie's **Mackenzie Blackwood**, 18, the Devils have a very intriguing prospect. The big dude was one of the 2015 draft's most coveted netminders. With a faster glove hand, he'll become quite intimidating.



Former Edmonton Oiler Viktor Fasth signed with the KHL's CSKA Moscow to get his game back. He knew he'd have to battle for crease time but probably wasn't expecting **Ilya Sorokin** to have such a huge campaign. Sorokin rocked a .953 SP through nine games. He also did good work for the silver-medal Russians at the 2015 WJC.



Two straight years, **Brandon Halverson** went to his hometown of Traverse City to play in the prospects tournament Detroit hosts for eight NHL teams. Both times he was sidelined by injury. The bad luck extended to his OHL play this year, as the 6-foot-4 stopper struggled with powered-down Sault Ste. Marie. He has lots of potential, though.



FRESH LA BELLE AIR FROM PRINCETON

Carey Price injury replacement Condon was a free agent checking out the want ads a couple years ago

PRINCETON HAD LOST TO CORNELL IN the 2013 ECAC playoffs and Mike Condon sat in his dorm room contemplating his future in hockey. "I wasn't drafted and I was checking the ECHL injury reports to see if there were any goalies hurt," Condon said. "Problem was the reports were two days late and by the time I heard about them, the team had found someone."

Condon's break came when Chris Carrozzini of the Ontario Reign was injured. "My agent called and said they needed someone right away," Condon said. "When the team called, I saw Ontario, CA on the call display and I thought it was Canada. I told them I had to check to see if I had my passport and they told me, I didn't need a passport to go to California. I had a 120-page thesis due, so I went to the library and took out as many books as I could. I think I paid \$150 in excess baggage fees."

A 3-1 record in Ontario earned him a promotion to Houston (AHL) where he had a 3-0 record. Shortly after Condon returned to Princeton to complete his political science degree, he signed an entry-level deal with the Canadiens.

He was a success in his rookie season with Wheeling in the ECHL, was one of

the few bright spots for the AHL Hamilton Bulldogs the following season and beat out incumbent Dustin Tokarski for the backup job in Montreal this season.

Condon showed he could handle a heavier workload when Carey Price was sidelined with an injury. He went 3-0-1 during a homestand, capping it with a 4-2 win over Boston. "That was special because it's the team where I grew up," said Condon, who is from the Boston suburb of Needham.

Condon was a prep school star at Belmont Hill School and admits to being disappointed when none of the four major area schools recruited him. "I grew up with the Beanpot - Harvard, B.C., B.U.," he said. "(Boston University) showed interest when I started 10-0, but then I lost my next six games. It was tough leaving Boston for New Jersey."

Condon might have gone to school closer to home if he had spent a year in the USHL, but he was anxious to begin college. He said his father, a sergeant in the Massachusetts State Police, paid a lot to send him to Belmont Hill. "My gift to him was to pay for college. In fact, I'm still paying," said Condon, who is in a better position to pay off his student loans with an NHL salary. — **PAT HICKEY**



IN THE ZONE AND LOVING IT

Less pressure and modest expectations in Philadelphia bring out the best in Neuvirth

WHEN A PLAYER WINDS UP ON HIS fourth team in 16 months, there's a temptation for NHL deep thinkers to pencil a line through his name. But right now, in the case of Philadelphia Flyers goaltender Michal Neuvirth, those experts might be penning a line under his name.

In nine starts, the 2006 Washington Capitals second-rounder had three shutouts, was in the NHL's top 10 best in save percentage (.939) and in the top 15 for goals-against average (2.15). A small sample, to be sure, but relevant in Philadelphia because starter Steve Mason got off to such a slow start, perhaps creating one of those fan-popular "goalie controversies."

GM Ron Hextall wanted to upgrade the No. 2 goalie position this year after Ray Emery exited. But even Hextall didn't expect this kind of production, this good, this soon. In 47-plus seasons of play, no Flyer goalie had ever started a career, or even a season, with three shutouts in nine starts.

Teammate and fellow Czech Jakub Voracek suggests Neuvirth might be flourishing because of a different role than what he experienced with Washington, Buffalo and the Islanders.

"Sometimes when you're playing with less pressure, it can help," Voracek said. "When you go to the game with the feeling, 'If I win the game, my confidence is going to be higher,' it helps for sure."

Neuvirth, 27, doesn't sound like he wants to get caught up in any competition talk. He's been around long enough to know that if his salary is \$1.6 million and the No. 1 guy (Mason) is making \$4.1 million, the No. 2 guy is only as good as his last game. "I've been relaxed since training camp," Neuvirth said. "I don't feel any pressure or anything like that. I'm just going day by day and giving my best each day."

So no concerns about how many starts he might get this season? "I just worry about stopping pucks," he said. "I feel like I'm reading the game well. I'm patient and I'm reacting to the game."

Even Mason, who missed a half-dozen games first due to a family medical emergency and then a case of flu, acknowledges Neuvirth's early brilliance. "He's been excellent," Mason said. "When you see a goaltender play the way he is, it's fun to watch. He strived to be in the zone he is right now. The game looks like it's coming to him pretty easy." — **WAYNE FISH**

BEST GOALIE PROSPECT



Ottawa won the **Matt O'Connor** sweepstakes last spring when the undrafted collegian graduated from Boston University. He was one of the reasons the Sens felt comfortable trading Robin Lehner over the summer. They hope O'Connor takes charge of the AHL No. 1 job, and they gave him an NHL game when Craig Anderson was injured.



Some scouts believe **Anthony Stolarz** was underrated as a youth, but he got on the radar thanks to his NAHL season with Corpus Christi. From there, the 6-foot-6 New Jersey native spent time in the NCAA and OHL, winning a title with the London Knights along the way. Now a pro, Stolarz is putting up monster stats for AHL Lehigh Valley.



If you think **Matt Murray** came out of nowhere, talk to the Pens brass: even they didn't expect him to be this good. The lanky Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds product was money in his first pro year, ringing off an AHL-record shutout streak of 30:11 in 2014-15. He had 12 goose eggs altogether and is carrying on his excellence this year.



How loaded are the Blues in goal? Top prospects **Jordan Binnington**, Pheonix Copley and Ville Husso combined for one regulation loss in October. Binnington will be the first to receive an NHL shot. He cemented the Chicago Wolves' No. 1 gig in the AHL last season by starting a franchise-record 18 straight games.



After producing a ton of NHL goalies in the 1990s, the Sharks have hit a dry patch. They had to acquire starter Martin Jones this summer. Prior to 2015, they picked one netminder in a span of six drafts. In 2015, the Sharks grabbed New Hampshire commit **Mike Robinson** in the third round and Jake Kupsky in the seventh round.

BEST GOALIE PROSPECT



Krister Gudlevskis, 23, almost singlehandedly beat Canada as Latvia's goalie at the 2014 Olympics, but his body of work elsewhere has impressed as well. He's been a standout for Latvia in international play the past couple of seasons. He's in his third AHL campaign and should get the majority of the starts with Tampa's farm team.



The 2014 Memorial Cup's top goaltender, **Antoine Bibeau** was a solid backup for the Leafs farm team last season. Now he backstops a strong Marlies squad as the No. 1. With James Reimer a pending UFA and Jonathan Bernier with one extra year left on his deal, Bibeau has a chance of getting the Leafs' net sooner rather than later.



It's hard to believe **Thatcher Demko** is in his third year at Boston College, as he is still only 19. He turns 20 just before the 2016 WJC, so he's ineligible. It's possible Demko will turn pro after his junior season and aim for a bigger test in the AHL. He allowed just six goals in his first seven games with the Eagles this season.



Conventional wisdom lately dictates you shouldn't draft Russians or goalies in the first round, but the Caps have had luck with both. **Ilya Samsonov** was their man in 2015. He was the most complete netminder in the draft. Big, technically proficient and competitive, he's meeting the hype with KHL Metallurg Magnitogorsk.



The Jets' Connor Hellebuyck has taken the unofficial mantle from Anaheim's John Gibson to become the world's best goalie prospect. But Winnipeg, stacked in net, has a second high-end stopper in the system: **Eric Comrie**, the former WHL standout. He and Hellebuyck form a nearly unsolvable battery with AHL Manitoba.



IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO GET BETTER

How is Miller playing so well in his mid-30s?
It's all about evolving the way he thinks his position

FOR RYAN MILLER, LAST SEASON WAS about adapting. He was in a new city, he had a new coach, he was a new father and he had a new injury, requiring five months to fully recover from a February knee sprain.

This season for the Vancouver Canucks goaltender, it's strictly about competing. The early returns are a flashback to his 2009-10 Vezina Trophy performance. In his first dozen starts, Miller, 35, posted a 2.14 goals-against average, the best of his career. His .923 save percentage was only bettered by a .929 in his Vezina season. "I just want to compete and really simplify things and get back to the attitude that got me in the league," he said.

Miller has evolved and added to the foundation of his aggressive game. He's challenging shooters at the top of the crease, maintaining his feet and patience in eyeball-to-eyeball confrontations and is even using the odd pokecheck. He's ahead of the curve in understanding the advantage composite sticks provide the new wave of young guns and just where they're aiming. "He sees things I don't see," said Canucks coach Willie Desjardins. "He's at a different level knowing what shooter is coming in, what hand

he is and everything away from the puck. He's got great vision."

Most goalies carry their catching glove high instead of at the hip to provide quicker shot reaction and take away scoring chances. But shooters are setting up differently to combat that. "They're always looking for new spots, and it's something that happens every few years in the NHL," Miller said. "Goalies get ahead, guys catch up, and we try to do something else, and they figure it out. It's the way hockey is."

"I've been a pretty low-handed guy through my career. My eye-hand co-ordination of where you start with your body and head and what you get used to coming up through the ranks is kind of where you end up."

The game has never been quicker and shots have never come at goalies faster. Puck tracking, seeing a scoring chance develop before the trigger is pulled, is paramount. "When you're a kid, you follow the puck and sense what's around you for options," Miller said. "It's not laziness, but sometimes through a game, you think you can use your peripherals and cheat. Guys have found that equals not being square when every little thing counts." — **BEN KUZMA**

PROSPECT REPORT



THE TALL AND SHORT OF IT

The 2016 goaltending draft class lacks behemoths. How far will the crop of smaller, more athletic stoppers slide?

BY RYAN KENNEDY

BY ALL ACCOUNTS, CARTER Hart is having a great draft year with the WHL's Everett Silvertips. He's a second-year starter with some of the best stats in the league despite playing in what can be a ravenous American Division, featuring potent squads such as Seattle and Portland. Is he the top North American netminder available next summer? There's actually no collective wisdom right now.

In past years, big names such as Zach Fucale, Thatcher Demko and Malcolm Subban were obvious frontrunners –

though, to prove just how fickle tastes are, only Subban ended up a first-rounder and the first North American goalie taken his year. “Of all the years,” one NHL exec told me, “it really is wide open.”

Among European goalie prospects, Sweden's Filip Gustavsson is the main attraction. At 6-foot-2 he's got the size, while his structure and technique in net are also excellent. While Hart is no shrimp at 6-foot-1, there's something psychological about that one inch that puts him in a different class according to the

scouts. In fact, if he were an inch or two taller, he'd probably be the guy.

For whatever reason, it's not an enthusiastic year for netminding in the draft. “To be honest,” said another scout, “I'm not too high on any of them.”

Part of the reason could be that some of the bigger prospects struggled early on. Sherbrooke's Evan Fitzpatrick got bombed by QMJHL shooters, while Evan Cormier of OHL Saginaw was surviving but not thriving for the Spirit. Tyler Parsons has begun to heat up for OHL London, but he has a similar height to Hart. Not that perception is keeping these kids down. Draft stock plays second fiddle to actually stopping the puck, and with teens able to snipe the top corners like some pros these days, the junior goalies are on watch. “You have to be aware of it,” Hart said. “It's all about crease management, managing your depth and using speed to your advantage.”

And hey, Jonathan Quick is no redwood, and he seems to have carved out a decent niche

LITTLE BIG MAN

Scouts consider Hart slightly “undersized” at 6-foot-1. He uses his speed to make saves.

for himself in Los Angeles. Talent hawks do recognize size isn't everything. “There's a good mix of athleticism in this draft,” said the executive. “Plenty of guys play at six-foot, but it's a longer path.”

For those more risk averse, there's a good chance some late bloomers in the USHL or NAHL hear their names called on a second or third go-around in the draft pool this summer. But for those who think Hart can get the job done, they will find more than just his Everett resume. He was also one of two netminders that shut the door for Team Canada at the Ivan Hlinka U-18 tournament this summer, where the nation once again won gold. “It was definitely my best hockey moment,” Hart said. “It was an incredible honor to throw on the Maple Leaf.”

Hart's battery mate was the Peterborough Petes' Dylan Wells, who stoned international shooters at the tourney but is having a little more trouble domestically. Still, Wells reaches that magical 6-foot-2 mark, so the interesting thing to watch is if he or fast friend Hart goes first when the picks are made.

Inevitably, at least one or two goalies from this crop will make the grade at the pro level, even if it does take a little longer for them to get there. Next year's crop features big American Jake Oettinger (a late 1998 birthday) and a very impressive OHL Windsor rookie in Michael DiPietro, who has some of the best stats in the league while playing backup. Of course, DiPietro is only six-foot right now, so we may as well bookmark this debate for next year, as well. **TEN**



THE OILERS GET THEIR MAN

How badly did Edmonton want Brossoit? The Oilers made an extremely rare trade with bitter rival Calgary to acquire him

BY SEAN SHAPIRO

FIRE AND OIL MAKE A DEADLY mix. It's a scientific fact that embodies the Battle of Alberta between the Calgary Flames and Edmonton Oilers.

Yet the two sides found a temporary ceasefire Nov. 8, 2013, and goalie Laurent Brossoit was part of a four-player deal between the rivals (Ladislav Smid was the big name going south.) It was just the second trade between the franchises since the Flames moved to Calgary in 1980. And Brossoit, like everyone else, was caught off guard the Flames were willing to deal him across enemy lines. "I was even more in shock be-

cause I didn't know I was up for trade," Brossoit said. "And I wasn't. They said it was just one of those cases where the Oilers really wanted me."

Edmonton had been eyeing him since he started developing into a legitimate NHL prospect right under their noses at Rexall Place. After getting drafted 164th overall by Calgary in 2011, Brossoit flourished playing for the WHL's Edmonton Oil Kings the next two seasons. He led them to a WHL title in 2012 and helped the team reach the final in 2013 before he signed with Calgary that spring. "He's an absolute beast," said former

JUST VISITING

Brossoit starts for Edmonton's AHL affiliate but sees himself sticking in the NHL soon.

Oil Kings coach Derek Laxdal. "Real technical goaltender who battles his way through. He doesn't quit on pucks, and he shows up for big moments."

Oilers fans got their first taste of that last season when Brossoit made his NHL debut and turned in a masterful 49-save performance, even though the Oilers lost 3-1 to San Jose. "It felt really nice," Brossoit said. "It's one of those things you anticipate your whole life. To go in and get as many shots as I did was lucky. To feel as good as I did was even luckier."

And Brossoit is feeling good entering his third pro season. He's the starter for the Oilers' AHL affiliate, the Bakersfield Condors, and has relegated former Edmonton No. 1 Ben Scrivens to a backup role.

Brossoit is excited about the Oilers' future, especially with Connor McDavid, and wants to be part of the NHL team's plans sooner rather than later. "I'm looking to get up there and stick this year," Brossoit said. "If not, I'm looking to start in the NHL next year. And I don't think that feels too far off. I think this is the year I complete some of those goals I have set."



FANTASTIC FARM KIDS

1. MATT MURRAY

WILKES-BARRE/SCRANTON PENGUINS (PIT)

He set an AHL shutout streak record last year and has kept on ticking by racking up wins in 2015-16 thanks to his positioning and long frame.

2. CONNOR HELLEBUYCK

MANITOBA MOOSE (WPG)

He wasn't getting wins early, but his save percentage was among the best. Eric Comrie's playing well, too, as Hellebuyck's battery mate in town.

3. CALVIN PICKARD

SAN ANTONIO RAMPAGE (COL)

Patrick Roy thinks he's ready but wanted Pickard getting starts. His never-say-die attitude has him flying high in the AHL.

4. JOHN GIBSON

SAN DIEGO GULLS (ANA)

Like Pickard, Gibson could be in the NHL right now, but he is holding the fort in San Diego and getting the reps he needs to grow.

5. JOONAS KORPISALO

LAKE ERIE MONSTERS (CBJ)

Though he saw limited duty early on, Korpisalo had two shutouts in his first four starts, helping him to 'Monster' stats.



LAURENT BROSSOIT

POS G AGE 22 HT 6-3 WT 202 lbs
DRAFTED Calgary, 164th overall in 2011



SANDSTROM'S SHORT MEMORY

Swedish prospect has lots of talent, but most impressive attribute is his ability to put rare bad games behind him in a flash

BY UFFE BODIN

IT'S HOW YOU HANDLE DEFEAT AND deal with adversity that defines your character as an athlete. Especially if you're a goalie who's just been lit up.

Swedish prospect Felix Sandstrom had a rough outing against the United States at this year's under-20 tournament in Lake Placid, N.Y., allowing six goals in one period during a 10-4 drubbing. But it was the way he reacted to the loss that caught the eye of coach Rikard Gronborg. "I felt sorry for Felix since he was totally abandoned, but the next game he just shut the door as if nothing had happened and won us that game," Gronborg said.

FELIX SANDSTROM



POSITION
Goaltender

AGE 18
HEIGHT 6-2
WEIGHT 191 lbs

DRAFTED
Philadelphia,
70th in 2015

TAPPED BY TRE KRONOR

Sandstrom is the favorite to start for Team Sweden at the world juniors in Helsinki.

Sandstrom says he's learned to take bad games in stride: "It's nothing to get stressed out about. It's nothing that should affect your performance the next game. As long as you believe in your game and rely on the foundations of your game, you'll be all right."

Sandstrom, who'll likely be Sweden's starter at the 2016 world juniors in Helsinki, was drafted by the Philadelphia Flyers in the third round this year. Since then, he's become somewhat of a darling among fans of his Swedish League club Brynas.

He won the second-string job behind Austrian netminder Bernhard Starkbaum in the pre-season, but it didn't take Sandstrom long to challenge Starkbaum for the starting job. Through the first two months, they've shared duties 50-50. "It's more than I could ever hope for," Sandstrom said. "My expectations were to play a few games in the SHL and play mostly with the junior team. These past months have been full of happy surprises. You just walk around with a smile on your face."

Not surprised by the stellar play of the Gavle native is his goalie coach Pekka Alcen, who schooled netminders such as Anders Lindback, Jacob Markstrom and Eddie Lack before they left Brynas for the NHL. He sees a great future for his pupil. "Felix will be good enough to play in the NHL," Alcen said, adding, with a hearty laugh: "I don't assume things. I usually know things."



9

Shutouts for Sandstrom in just 17 games with Brynas' under-18 team in the 2012-13 season



SILVER BULLET

FILIP GUSTAVSSON HAS set a pretty high bar for himself this season.

The elite 2016 goaltending prospect was Sweden's netminder at the summer Ivan Hlinka tournament, which takes place every August in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Canada lords over the affair (the U.S. does not send the NTDP kids), but the Swedes finished second in large part due to Gustavsson. "He was outstanding," said one NHL scout. "I'd say he carried the team to the silver medal."

The Lulea goalie, who has played most of the season with the SHL squad's under-20 team, is big and fast, which allows him to cover a lot of net. Some of his best work at the tournament came against archrival Finland in the semifinal, where he stopped 38 shots in a 2-1 win, including 21 in the first period alone. In fact, the only goal Gustavsson allowed re-directed off a skate and went through his pads.

Other Swedish goalies to keep an eye on this year for the draft include Daniel Marmenlind and Filip Larsson, but so far, Gustavsson is in a class of his own, the scout said. — RYAN KENNEDY

PROSPECT
NEED TO
KNOW



MARTIN REWAY led the Czech League in scoring until his team demoted him due to contractual issues



JEREMY BRACCO is clicking with Arizona pick Ryan MacInnis in the OHL after Bracco left Boston College



North Dakota freshman **BROCK BOESER** found instant chemistry with Chicago first-rounder Nick Schmaltz

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LITTLE BIG MEN ON CAMPUS

AS THE NHL EMBRACES SMALLER PLAYERS, MORE AND MORE ARE COMING FROM THE NCAA RANKS

The exploits of players like Johnny Gaudreau, Mats Zuccarello and Tyler Johnson in the NHL last season proved that now, more than ever, you don't need size to stand out in a crowd of NHL players.

NCAA hockey doesn't produce all of these players — for example, Johnson played in the WHL and Zuccarello developed in Europe. But the numbers show that U.S. college hockey develops a disproportionate number of undersized NHLers, like Calder Trophy finalist Gaudreau out of Boston College.

While 30% of all NHL players played college hockey, that number rises to 35% when looking at players under 6 feet tall (see graphic). The smaller the player, the bigger the NCAA influence — nearly half (49%) of NHL players under 5-foot-10 played college hockey.

NCAA schools have a history of producing NHL talent that fits that bill, from Adam Oates (Rensselaer) to Martin St. Louis (Vermont) and beyond.

A big reason is the development those players enjoy while on campus. Four years of eligibility allows them to mature until age 22 or 23 — and the vast majority remain on campus for three or four years. The

NCAA schedule allows time for strength and conditioning, so they can add muscle to their smaller frames. And the practice-to-game ratio allows them to work on their individual skills.

"There's less clutching and grabbing and there are now, I think, more opportunities for smaller players and skill players and late developers," said Bowling Green alumnus Dan Bylsma, head coach of the Buffalo Sabres. **"That's really kind of what college hockey offers you as a developing hockey player. Instead of being 18 when you're drafted and trying to fend for yourself, you're 21-22 and turning pro at that point in time."**

College hockey isn't just a small man's game — in fact, 45% of NHLers 6-foot-6 or taller in 2014-15 played college hockey as well. But with smaller players making NHL headlines and earning more opportunities like Gaudreau's, the NCAA will continue to develop that talent for the next level. ■

6'

5'

Boston College alum Johnny Gaudreau stands at 5'9".

SMALL WORLD

Percentage of 2014-15 NHLers developed in NCAA hockey

UNDER 5'10" **49%**

UNDER 5'11" **39%**

UNDER 6'0" **35%**

OVERALL **30%**

Source: NHL.com

NCAA

HOCKEY

THE LOGICAL
PATH TO THE NHLNEW
FACES**KYLE
CONNOR**

Michigan standout
1 of 8 first-round NHL
Draft picks playing
NCAA hockey.

**BRAD
BERRY**

Leads North
Dakota as the
only first-year
coach in NCAA.

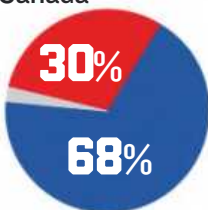
**ARIZONA
STATE**

60th NCAA
program begins
in 2015-16.

WHERE NCAA PLAYERS ARE FROM

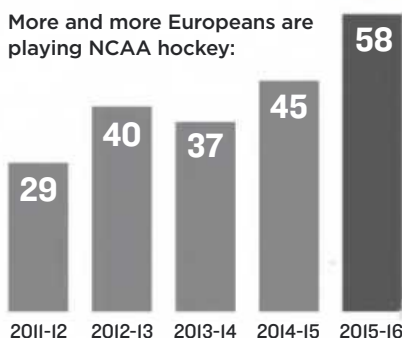
WORLD

Canada

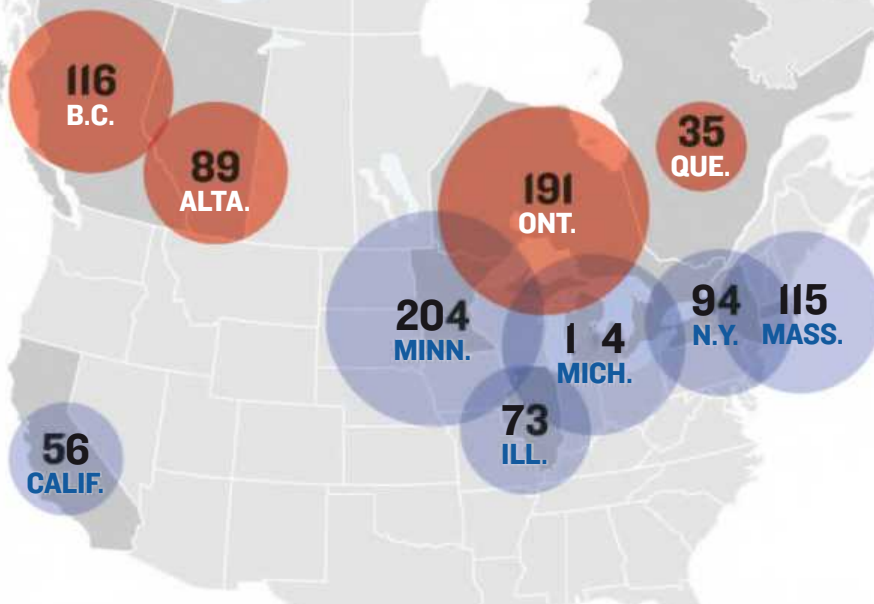
2%
EuropeUnited
States

EUROPEAN INFLUX

More and more Europeans are
playing NCAA hockey:



TOP SOURCES



NEARLY 200
NHL DRAFT PICKS ARE
PLAYING NCAA HOCKEY



**NHL teams with the most
draft picks in NCAA:**

Chicago – 14
Minnesota – 13
Buffalo, Pittsburgh – 11
Boston, Winnipeg – 10

**NCAA teams with the most
NHL draft picks:**

Boston College – 13
Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota – 12
Boston University – 10
Notre Dame, Omaha – 9

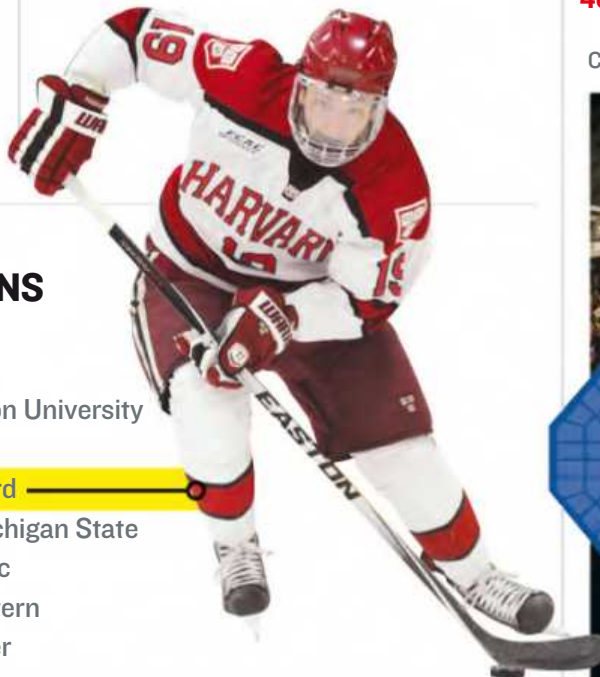
WIDE-OPEN FIELD

10 teams earned first-place votes in the preseason polls:

Boston College
Minnesota Duluth
Boston University
North Dakota
Minnesota State
Providence
Harvard
Minnesota
Miami
UMass Lowell

Four of the last five NCAA champions have won for the first time:

2011 – Minnesota Duluth
2013 – Yale
2014 – Union
2015 – Providence



EIGHT 2014-15 ALL-AMERICANS RETURN

Alex Lyon, Yale

Matt Grzelcyk, Boston University

Rob O'Gara, Yale

Jimmy Vesey, Harvard

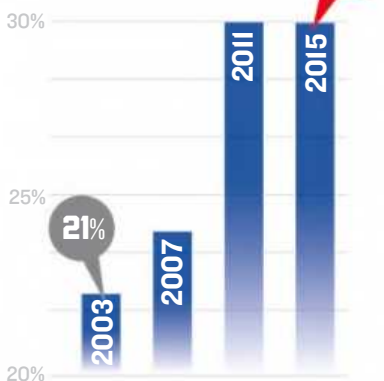
Jake Hildebrand, Michigan State

Sam Anas, Quinnipiac

Kevin Roy, Northeastern

Trevor Moore, Denver

30% OF NHL PLAYERS IN 2014-15 WERE NCAA ALUMS:



C THREE NEW NHL CAPTAINS PLAYED NCAA HOCKEY:

MAX PACIORETTY
(Michigan)

ANDY GREENE
(Miami)

JOE PAYELSKI
(Wisconsin)



10 NHL ARENAS WILL HOST NCAA GAMES IN 2014-15:

- Amalie Arena, Tampa
- Barclays Center, New York
- Consol Energy Center, Pittsburgh
- Gila River Arena, Arizona
- Joe Louis Arena, Detroit
- Madison Square Garden, New York
- Nationwide Arena, Columbus
- TD Garden, Boston
- Wells Fargo Center, Philadelphia
- Xcel Energy Center, St. Paul



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**15 SCHOOLS PLAYED
TO 90%+ CAPACITY
IN 2014-15**

The 20
largest
schools
averaged

**6,068
FANS PER GAME**

NCAA GRADUATION RATE

**#1
AMONG
MEN'S
SPORTS**

HOCKEY

92%

LACROSSE

91%

FENCING

90%

GYMNASTICS

89%

WATER POLO

88%

NCAA AVG.

84%

Source: NCAA 2014 Graduation Success Rate



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1 OF 58,000

NORTH AMERICAN BANTAMS IN
ANDERS' 1990 BIRTH YEAR.

1 OF 211

IN ANDERS' 2009
NHL DRAFT CLASS.

6th
ROUND

152nd
OVERALL

1 OF 450

NCAA DIV I PLAYERS FROM
ANDERS' BIRTH YEAR.

92%
graduate!

1 OF 50

FROM 2009 DRAFT TO PLAY
110+ NHL GAMES.

Sources: USA Hockey, Hockey Canada,
NHL, College Hockey Inc.



"I'm grateful for the opportunity Notre Dame gave me to fulfill both of those goals—reaching the NHL and graduating from such a prestigious institution."



ANDERS LEE

NEW YORK ISLANDERS

NOTRE DAME



ROUNDAABOUT ROUTE TO NHL

LaFontaine the latest in a line of draft-eligible goalies getting lots of time to shine and develop in the NAHL

HERE'S A FUN GAME: GUESS WHICH league provided the 2015 NHL draft with the most goalies. Gold star if you picked the North American League. The junior circuit had four netminders selected, the same number as the Czech Republic. Otherwise, the NAHL equalled the three CHL leagues combined (two from the QMJHL and one each from the OHL and WHL) and had one more than the USHL, which is considered superior. Why?

According to one NHL team exec, the NAHL has been smart about developing talent, giving 17-year-olds starter's minutes. "Winning is so important in the USHL," said the exec. "So you're seeing a lot of older goalies there now."

In the NAHL on the other hand, there's more leeway – and a lot more opportunity for draft-eligible goalies to showcase themselves. Plus, the sprawling circuit has 22 teams to the USHL's 17. The top netminder and 2016 draft prospect

in the NAHL now is Jack LaFontaine of the Janesville Jets. A Mississauga, Ont., product who played in the Ontario Jr. A League last season, LaFontaine tried out for the USHL's Fargo Force, but was blocked by two older netminders. So he

“THERE'S LEEWAY IN THE NAHL – MORE OPPORTUNITY FOR DRAFT-ELIGIBLE GOALIES TO SHOWCASE THEMSELVES

set out for Wisconsin, where the suburban Jets are based. "Everything happens for a reason," LaFontaine said. "It has always been a goal to pursue the NCAA; then the question was how to get there."

His early numbers will help that dream. Through nine starts, the 6-foot-3 rookie had three shutouts, a 1.32 goals-

NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Jack LaFontaine's path to the USHL was blocked by older goalies, so he turned to the NAHL and is excelling.

against average and .943 save percentage – all tops in the league. Talent hawks see a lot to like in the kid, too. "Obviously there's his size and positioning," said the exec. "But it's also his mental game; he's in control. There's no scrambling, he's very much in position. Very smooth."

LaFontaine wants to calm his game down and the 60-game schedule will give him plenty of reps. Same goes for NHL hopefuls Tommy Nappier (Springfield) and Tyler Johnson (Topeka).

The NAHL has produced some good goalies over the years, including Ryan Miller, but it's now doing so more consistently. Philadelphia prospect Anthony Stolarz and Connor Hellebuyck, in the Winnipeg Jets system, were important NAHLers in that regard. Like LaFontaine, the two got a chance to be No. 1 netminders and got on scouts' radars early. Both of them played in Texas; Stolarz for Corpus Christi and Hellebuyck for Odesa, where the big stopper told me he would show up at the rink in the morning in a hoodie and take it off when he left because it was too hot – in December.

But those perks don't extend to every team in the NAHL, which has franchises from New Jersey to Alaska. LaFontaine was girding himself for Janesville's first major trip when we spoke, a "two-week adventure" to Alaska, where the Jets will play Fairbanks one weekend, stay in Alaska for five days, then take on Kenai River for another two matches.

The next step for the NAHL is to catch up on skating talent. Of the nine players drafted out of the circuit in the past four years, only one was not a goalie: Ivan Chukarov, a defenseman now at UMass, was taken by Buffalo last year from the

Minnesota Wilderness. In that regard, the NAHL has work to do before it can be considered as a true peer to the USHL, which has the advantage of housing USA Hockey's National Team Development Program. Related fact: the NTDP used to play in the NAHL before jumping to the USHL to face stiffer competition. **THE**



MOVING ON

Roy was dealt to Colorado just four days after his embarrassing defeat to Detroit.



PATRICK
ROY

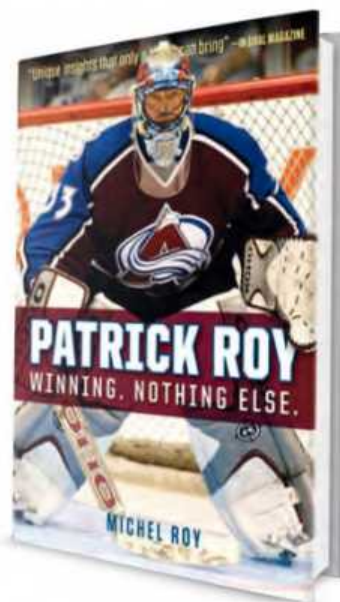
SENDING 'ST. PATRICK' PACKING

It's been 20 years since Roy was unceremoniously dealt from Montreal to Colorado. His public humiliation in the game that led up to it and all the fallout that followed are the stuff of infamy

BEFORE THE GAME, FORMER STARS from the two clubs were introduced: Marcel Pronovost and Mickey Redmond for the Wings, Bernard 'Boom Boom' Geoffrion and Maurice Richard for the Canadiens. The Rocket received a standing ovation that lasted several minutes.

Then the whirlwind was unleashed. By the end of the first period, Detroit already led 5-1. Patrick couldn't blame himself for any of the goals. Three of them were scored while the Canadiens were killing penalties, one of them with a two-man disadvantage near the end of the period, when Patrice Brisebois was given a five-minute major and a game misconduct while one of his teammates was already in the box. Every goal was a fine piece of work that Patrick was powerless to stop.

It was probably a good time to change goalies. If Francois Allaire had been there, that's what he would have recommended. But he wasn't, and Mario Tremblay still believed his team had a chance to catch up. It's hard to blame a rookie coach for being overconfident. At the very least, it was necessary to limit the humiliation on a Saturday night at the Forum.



Excerpt from:
**PATRICK ROY: WINNING.
NOTHING ELSE.**

By Michel Roy

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I CAN'T SAY THAT MARIO'S ATTITUDE BOTHERED ME MUCH. IT DIDN'T STOP ME FROM DOING MY JOB WELL. HE WOULD'VE EVENTUALLY APPRECIATED ME - PATRICK ROY



When the second period began, there were two minutes and 39 seconds remaining in Brisebois' penalty. Detroit cashed in on the man advantage. Slava Kozlov, left alone in front of the net, knocked in his third goal on a clever pass from Igor Larionov.

The score was 6-1. In Tremblay's position, Scotty Bowman would not have waited any longer to switch goalies: "I usually waited till the fifth goal, depending on the game and the score," Bowman later replied when asked about his strategy in similar circumstances. About that particular game, he added: "We consistently controlled the puck. That was one of the best performances in my (nine-year) association with the Wings."

Detroit was unstoppable that evening. On the blueline, the Habs were springing leaks all over the place, and the game was out of control. Despite that, Tremblay still didn't pull Patrick.

That's what led to the drama that was about to take place. At 4:33, young Mathieu Dandenault went in on a breakaway on Patrick and misfired, but the puck got stuck in his equipment. He kept on skating and the puck entered the net. A lucky goal, but that made the score 7-1. Steve Shutt, up on the catwalk, headphones on, yelled to Cournoyer, standing next to Tremblay behind the bench: "You've got to pull Patrick out of the game now."

Patrick looked toward the bench in desperation. No reaction. He saw Yvan Cournoyer talking to Tremblay, who didn't budge.

About two minutes after the goal, Sergei Fedorov let rip a bullet from the blueline, which Patrick handled easily. Some of the fans applauded mockingly. Exasperated and defenseless, Patrick threw up his arms in hopelessness.

The game looked like a meeting between the Red Army and the Fredericton Canadiens of the AHL, and Patrick was paying the price. He looked to the bench again. Tremblay still didn't make a move. Play resumed. Every time Patrick made a save, the crowd cheered in derision.

Finally, Bowman sent his fourth line into the melee. But briefly. Keith Primeau fed a beautiful pass to Greg Johnson, alone in front of the goal. Now it was 8-1.

Patrick stopped looking to his coach. He understood he was being punished and humiliated. They'd abandoned him. Discouraged, he shook his head in disgust. At the bench, Tremblay, apparently thinking the punishment had lasted just about long enough, instructed backup goalie Pat Jablonski to get ready. Slowly. Very slowly. So slowly in fact, that nearly two minutes later, Fedorov had time to score another goal at point blank range from the slot - the ninth goal on Patrick. He couldn't be blamed for any of the goals, except perhaps Dandenault's tally on a breakaway, on which Patrick had bad luck. Jablonski finally came in to replace him.

Patrick leaned his stick against the wall in the corridor and handed his mask and gloves to Pierre Gervais. He walked by Tremblay on the way to the backup goalie's stool. Once again, he was trying to extend a hand. He would have

at least expected Tremblay to make some sympathetic gesture, as coaches normally do when they pull a goalie. He would have liked a sign of encouragement, anything; a pat on the back, like the one Tremblay had given Vincent Damphousse before the game. There was nothing.

Patrick realized that it didn't make sense anymore. It couldn't go on like that. He turned around and walked past Tremblay again. Still nothing. Not only did Tremblay not react, he stood stock still with his arms crossed, nose in the air, looking scornful. Patrick got it. It was the end. He realized it. Later, he would say: "If I'd had some word of support from Mario Tremblay, if I'd felt that he wanted to help me, I wouldn't have gone to see Ronald Corey. That's when it hit me." He approached Ronald Corey, sitting right behind the bench, and told him: "I've just played my last game with the Canadiens." He passed by Tremblay again, who hadn't changed expression, sat down on the bench and yelled to him:

"You heard me!"

After the second period, Bob Sauve called up trainer Gaetan Lefebvre on the cell.

"Gaetan, can you give me Patrick?"

"Wait."

Lefebvre went into the dressing room and handed Patrick the phone.

"Sauve wants to talk to you."

"Hello!"

"Patrick, it's Bob. When the game's over, get dressed quickly, don't say a word to anyone, and come and meet me by the back door. I'll be parked there."

"OK."

Tremblay entered the dressing room and made a beeline for his goalie.

"What did you say to Corey?"

"Listen Mario, we'll discuss it after the game."

"F---in' right you f---in' asshole!"

Patrick got up.

"That's enough, you're not going to call me an asshole in this room!"

Tremblay turned and left the dressing room.

Detroit won 11-1.

When the game was over, Sauve picked up Patrick. The two men spent most of the night talking, and then Sauve drove Patrick home. The next morning, after a short night, the two met back at Sauve's house to continue to ponder the situation and explore every possible avenue. The agent wanted to see if the rift with Tremblay was irreparable.

They reviewed the events of the recent weeks: Tremblay's uncompromising attitude toward Patrick

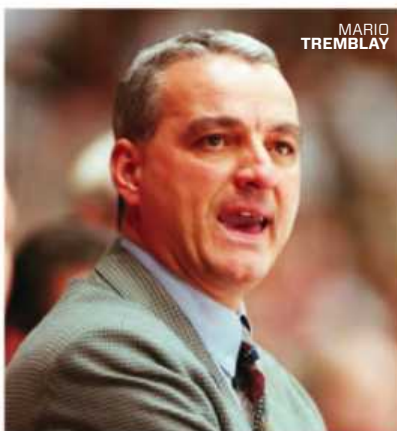
even about trivialities, his officiousness, his habit of firing shots near Patrick's head in practice, his determination to put Patrick in his place and break him, as Bowman had done with his players in the past, particularly the plumbers and rookies. There was nothing irreparable. To this day, Patrick says, "I can't say that Mario's attitude bothered me much. It didn't stop me from doing my job well. He would have eventually appreciated me because the team would have won. He would have ended up liking me."

But there still remained the humiliation of the previous evening in front of a million and a half TV viewers, and its consequences. Would he still be booed and ridiculed at the slightest sign of weakness? Would Tremblay be wise enough to come halfway and treat Patrick more considerately? Could he get over the fact that Patrick had spoken directly to the team's president in front of a million and a half viewers? Could he accept that his authority had been challenged? What about Co-



POINT BREAK

Roy was left in for nine goals against the Wings before finally, mercifully, getting the hook.



rey, who claimed after the game that he hadn't understood what Patrick had said? Where did he stand? With diligence and diplomacy, he alone could put the pieces back together. Patrick and Sauve agreed to contact Rejean Houle to find out the Canadiens' position on the matter. Houle summoned them to his office in the mid-afternoon.

The GM didn't mince words. "There's no going back. We're going to make a trade." Both Patrick and Sauve noticed that Houle was shaken; he had tears in his eyes.

Clearly, he was carrying out someone else's will. In hindsight, Patrick thinks, "Rejean Houle was a good person, maybe too good for that job. If he had been able to stand up to his coach, he would have been more successful in the post. I can't hold it against him. He liked me and was extremely generous." So whose will was it?

If Tremblay had wanted to keep Patrick in Montreal, it would have been easy for him to convince his bosses. If Corey had wanted Patrick in Montreal, it would have been easy for him to intervene and convince the people he had just hired. But they would have had to put their egos aside in the interest of the team. Patrick would have regrouped and they could have started afresh.

The will just wasn't there. **THEY**



A GENUINE SOB STORY

Down 3-0 in the Cup final, Montreal goalies Durnan and McNeil are driven to tears as the torch passes from one to the other

SITTING IN THE MONTREAL DRESSING ROOM DURING THE 1950 semifinal between the New York Rangers and Canadiens were two Habs goaltenders and both were weeping uncontrollably. One was future Hall of Famer Bill Durnan and alongside him was raw rookie Gerry McNeil. In a sense, both stoppers should have been happy to be challenging for the Stanley Cup last won by the Canadiens four years earlier. So what was the sobbing all about?

To understand this bizarre image, a scene-setter is in order. For starters, Durnan was a six-time Vezina Trophy-winner and six-time first team all-star. He had spearheaded the Canadiens to a pair of Cups and another was in the offing since his club had finished far ahead of the Rangers, a star-less club considered a distinct underdog against the Bleu, Blanc et Rouge led by Maurice 'Rocket' Richard in his prime.

But at 34, Durnan knew he was in the twilight of his career

PAYING THE BILL

Despite winning six Vezina Trophies for the Habs, Durnan never earned more than \$10,500 in a season.

and in January 1950, he confided in coach Dick Irvin that he'd retire after the playoffs. When I interviewed the goalie at his Toronto apartment in the summer of 1969 for my book, *Those Were The Days*, Durnan was blunt about his final season. "My reflexes had gotten a little slow," he told me, "and, besides, the money wasn't really that good. With all those Vezina Trophies and all those write-ups that said I was the greatest goaltender of all-time, the most I ever made with the Canadiens was \$10,500."

Durnan also knew that Montreal prospect McNeil had replaced him for six games during the 70-game schedule and turned in a magnificent 1.50 goals-against average. By contrast, Durnan's mark in 64 games was 2.20, but the competitive fire was still in his belly. "Bill was so obsessed with winning another Vezina," Irvin recalled, "that if he had lost it in '49-50, I'd bet he would have been back playing goal for us the next year, bad nerves and all. Winning the Vezina was an obsession with him."

Another factor – rarely discussed then as now – was a serious accident involving the goaltender that Irvin believed shortened Durnan's career. "A skate pierced his head," the coach remembered, "and wrecked his nervous system. He cracked up after that."

Normally an edgy type, Durnan suffered even more anxiety once the playoffs began and his game disintegrated like Humpty Dumpty after the fall. New York triumphed in succession, 3-1, 3-2 and 4-1. Durnan's GAA was a below-average 3.33.

Durnan: "I knew I'd quit after the season and was aware of how good McNeil was so I told Irvin to let the kid finish the series. I was afraid I was blowing things. I really wasn't, I guess but we hadn't won a game and I didn't want to be blamed if we lost to the Rangers. But this much was certain; I knew that in those playoffs I wasn't playing as well as I had in the past. I figured, what the hell, I'm quitting and this is as good a time as any. If the kid goes in and wins, well, great, it's a terrific start for him."

Irvin agreed with Durnan's suggestion and, as the teams suited up for Game 4, the coach told Bill to take the rookie into another room and soothe 24-year-old McNeil for his playoff debut. Sure enough, the grand old man of goaltending and the heir to his throne disappeared into the anteroom. But they spent so much time away from the clubhouse, Irvin decided to investigate what was happening. According to author Ed Fitkin, Irvin found his two goalies sitting together bawling like babies.

Durnan was sobbing: "Don't worry about a thing, Gerry, everything is going to be all right." There was no reply from McNeil. "Gerry said nothing," Fitkin noted. "He was just sobbing."

At first, Irvin was angry with himself for proposing the two goalie meeting in the first place. "I thought I pulled a boner," Irvin concluded, "but that night McNeil played one of the greatest games of his life." Sure enough, McNeil thrilled the Forum crowd with a 3-2 victory after 15:19 of the first overtime period. But two nights later, goalie Chuck Rayner of the Rangers blanked the Habs 3-0 and the series was over.

So was Durnan's illustrious career. As he related to me as a 53-year-old some 46 years ago, "I'm glad I went out when I did. I do think I did the right thing from the viewpoint of playing hockey." Then, a pause for an exhale: "A few more write-ups weren't going to interest the grocer that much!"

By that time, I was almost in tears.

P.S. Durnan won the Vezina Trophy in 1950 while Rayner won the Hart Trophy. **THE**



MTL CANADIENS | 2015-16

Jersey HOUND

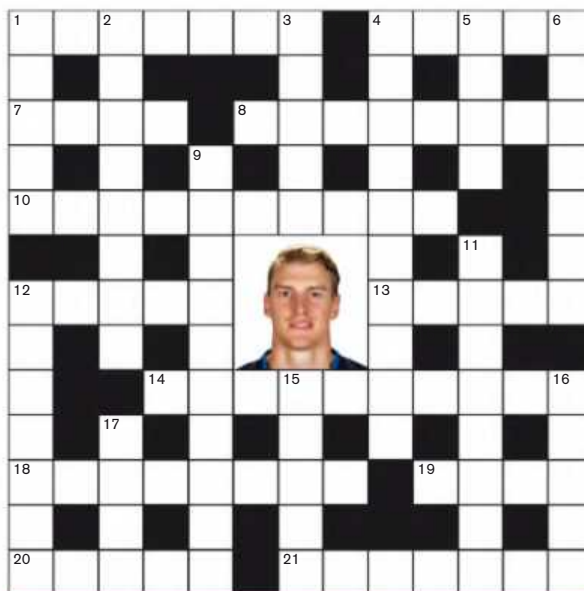
In nearly 100 years of NHL membership, the Habs haven't sported very many looks. And why change what is already an iconic uniform?

That classic sweater is all well and good for the regular season, but with the Canadiens playing Boston in the Winter Classic this season, something special was needed.

Enter this amazing white edition, which takes elements from past Montreal sweaters and melds them together for a new take on the 'CH' jersey. The most notable mark on the sweater is the globe on the sleeve, which takes its cues from the 'world champions' edition Montreal wore in 1924-25 after the Habs' first NHL-affiliated Stanley Cup. — **RYAN KENNEDY**

CROSSWORD

By Larry Humber



ANSWERS AVAILABLE IN THE NEXT ISSUE AND AT THN.com/XWORD

ACROSS

- 1 He's now coach in Toronto
- 4 Doesn't play, ___ the pines
- 7 Not home
- 8 Forwards who shun defensive duties
- 10 The NHL's top rookie in 2009-10, pictured
- 12 ___ Price is between the pipes
- 13 Houston was home of this AHL team
- 14 An NHLer for two decades, he helped the Leafs to three Stanley Cups
- 18 Trophy awarded to Canada's top senior team
- 19 O-Pee-___ was a Canadian card maker
- 20 Hull and ___ were a deadly duo in St. Louis
- 21 Gets ready to tangle, ___ off

DOWN

- 1 Hard shot
- 2 Fighters
- 3 Chris ___ is a Bruin forward
- 4 He's a winger with the Blues
- 5 King blueliner ___ Doughty
- 6 The Lamoureuxs are twin ___ who represented the U.S. at the Olympics
- 9 Gretzky's junior team, No. 1 in THN's Dream Teams Collector's Edition
- 11 A rest after a long shift
- 12 Where the Cup winners call home
- 15 Blanks, ___ out
- 16 He's captain in 12 Down
- 17 The area directly in front of the goal

LAST ISSUE'S CROSSWORD SOLUTION ACROSS 1. MacTAVISH, 8. AGENT, 9. DEFENSE, 10. NASSAU, 11. ADROIT, 12. STEAL, 14. LEAFS, 17. SKATES, 19. NOGGIN, 20. HECKLER, 21. HORSE, 22. REINSTATE
DOWN 2. AHEAD, 3. TREVOR, 4. VISIT, 5. HARASS, 6. MESSIER, 7. ST. BULLIES, 11. AVALANCHE, 13. BADGERS, 15. SNIPER, 16. JACKET, 17. STEEN, 18. EJECT

Behind THE MASK

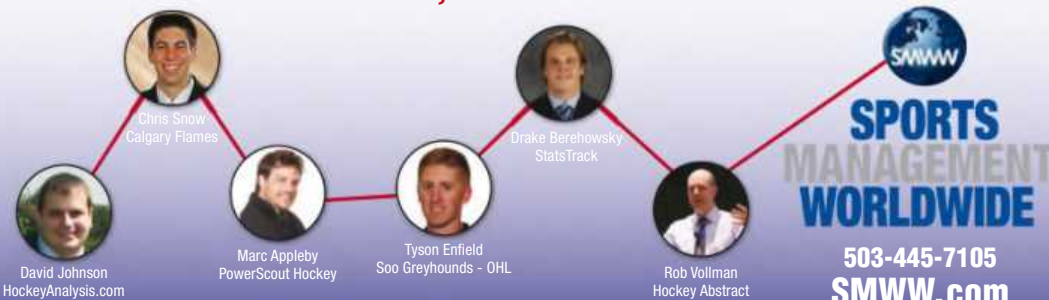
SCOTT WEDGEWOOD | ALBANY DEVILS

"Gotta support the team." Any *Seinfeld* fan should feel the urge to blurt out the character David Puddy's famous line upon seeing him and his painted face adorning Wedgewood's mask. The AHL Devils goalie and artist Dave Gunnarsson are both massive fans of the show. — **MATT LARKIN**



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BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATERS

Analytics are telling us teams should give big deals to rising stars rather than pay for what a vet did in the past



ANZE KOPITAR

IF THERE'S ANY NHL TEAM THAT SHOULD be acquainted with the perils of giving albatross-like contracts to declining players, it should be the Los Angeles Kings. They once had Dustin Brown on one of the best deals in the league, then signed him to one of the worst, one that has him tied to the Kings for six more years at \$5.9 million annually. They also have Marian Gaborik for another five years at almost \$5 million per season.

Perhaps that's why the anticipated extension for Anze Kopitar is taking so long to complete. And it might be that if Kopitar is looking for Jonathan Toews-Patrick Kane money, the Kings are wondering whether it's worth it.

If you're going to use analytics as a tool in player evaluation, you'd better listen to what they're saying. And what analytics is screaming about Kopitar is that the version the Kings sign to this extension will not be as good as the one they had under the previous contract. He'll be 29 when the deal takes effect. The Kings have had Kopitar in the prime of his career on a seven-year deal worth \$6.8 million a season. Does it make sense to sign him to more money and a longer term if his production is trending south?

Analytics tells us the age range for a player's peak is between 24 and 26. Some players will burn brightest for a longer period – perhaps between 22 and 28 – but generally it's a small window. Kopitar, for example, had his best season when he was 22, the first year of his expiring deal. His numbers have been in a slow, steady decline the past five years, and he's off to a sluggish start in 2015-16. The statistics are throwing up red flags everywhere on him.

And this is where the NHL has the notion of the bridge contract backwards. Traditionally, a bridge deal is used to take a player out of his entry-level deal for two or three years before he lands

the biggest contract of his career. That thinking needs to be flipped. The bridge deal should be for players such as Kopitar, to bridge them from their most productive years to their twilight seasons. And the money they're saving could go to players coming out of entry level, who would be paid for what they're going to do rather than for what they've done.

Tyler Toffoli's deal, a two-year bridge contract, will be up after 2016-17. Let's say by that time he's become a 40-goal scorer. Well, he's going to want to be paid that way. But the Kings will already have Kopitar at whatever they're paying him, Brown at \$5.9 million, Jeff Carter at \$5.3 million, Gaborik at \$4.9 million, Drew Doughty at \$7 million and Alec Martinez and Jake Muzzin at \$4 million each. So if you give Kopitar \$10 million, that's a total of \$41 million for seven players, and it doesn't leave much room for Toffoli.

The Kings would have been better off giving Toffoli his big money starting this season. Instead, they're going to have to give him an eight-year deal when he's 25 and will once again be locked into the cycle of having a declining player for a significant amount of time. In this case, the bridge deal might not have been the best idea. Nor should it be for Nathan MacKinnon and Seth Jones when their entry-level deals come up for renewal after this season. MacKinnon will be 21 and Jones 22 when next season starts. Clearly it makes more sense to pay top dollar to those players for the next eight years than it does to a player such as Kopitar. And what is even better for the Colorado Avalanche and Nashville Predators is they'll have their players for their best years, then transition them into their fading seasons with bridge deals.

And it can work. The Montreal Canadiens proved it with Tomas Plekanec. They signed him to a two-year extension worth \$6 million a season starting

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THE NHL HAS THE NOTION OF THE BRIDGE CONTRACT BACKWARDS. THAT THINKING NEEDS TO BE FLIPPED

in 2016-17, which is actually more than he's making now, because they know that at 33, he's likely going to decline. Plekanec is on a bridge deal. It's just the bridge is going in the other direction.

Does committing to a young player always work out? Well, no. After Jeff Skinner came out of his entry-level deal in Carolina, the Canes signed him to a six-year deal worth \$5.7 million a season that they're now trying to trade. But it's all about probability. And the probability a young player is going to get better and give you more production is greater than that of a player in his late 20s or early 30s.

Like the Habs, the New York Islanders, got it right. They locked up John Tavares and Kyle Okposo in their primes for deals that have turned out to be way below market value. The trick for the Islanders now is not to blow it with Okposo, whose contract comes up after this season. He will be 28 when 2016-17 begins and all forces of logic tell us he won't ever be better than he has been the past couple of seasons.

It's a dance NHL teams are getting better at doing, but they're not there yet. The way to build a better bridge is getting clearer, but it's up to NHL GMs to follow the blueprint. **TEN**

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